BBC
s little-known Russian sect
Social workers lack training to tackle coercive abuse, BBC finds
BBC
Keith Raniere Nxivm trial: Why it's so hard to stop a cult
Successo alla conferenza annuale della Federazione Europea dei Centri di Ricerca e Informazione sul settarismo (FECRIS)

ARTICLES

# Russian Anticult Lobby in British Media. How BBC Experts Serve the Russian RACIRS

December 2, 2024 · 25 mins read

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For many years, democratic countries have been exposed to propaganda, disinformation and anti-democratic narratives coming from Russia. The Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS, headed by Alexander Dvorkin, managed to infiltrate both the religious and public life of society, ensuring control and influence over government, private and public entities not just in Russia, but far beyond its borders. RACIRS agents operate worldwide, exerting influence through mass media in various countries. The leading British media are no exception either. In this article, let's take a look at the famous British broadcasting corporation BBC and some of its experts whose connections require particular attention.

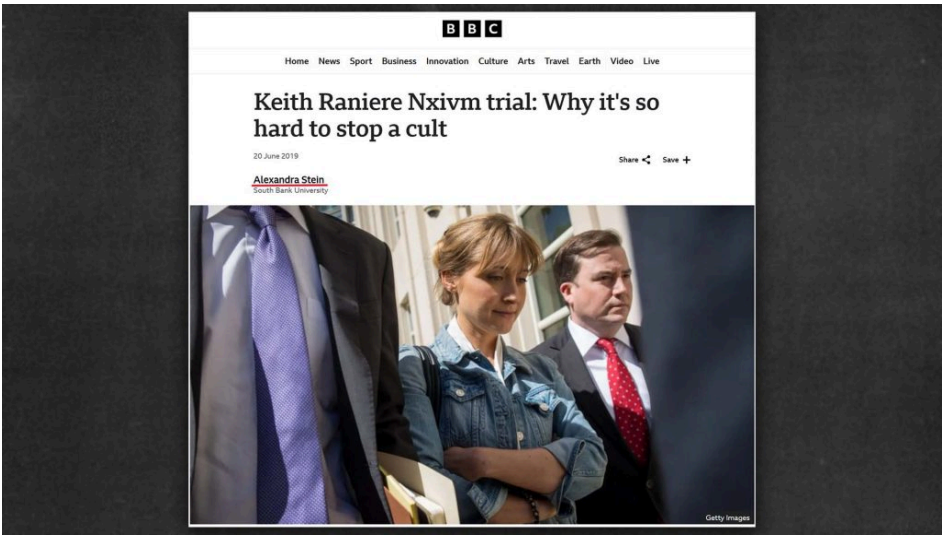
BBC is a media icon shaping the opinions of millions of people across the globe. Yet, whose side does it play on? Does it serve democracy? Or, through infiltrated agents of the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS, has the BBC turned into a tool which destroys the foundations of democracy and human freedom? This question is the core of our article, and we will try to answer it in as much detail as possible. It arose from the moment of articles published on the official BBC news portal, which alerted and forced us to pay closer attention to this

media outlet. The said articles are associated with disseminated propaganda and rhetoric identical to the propaganda and rhetoric of the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS.

In the course of our investigation, we identified the links of BBC experts with the international network of agents of the Russian organization RACIRS and directly with its leader, Alexander Dvorkin. Let's consider specific examples in more detail.

# RACIRS's anti-democratic rhetoric at BBC

Please note an article published on the BBC portal [1].


BBC
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Keith Raniere Nxivm trial: Why it's so hard to stop a cult
20 June 2019
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Alexandra Stein
South Bank University
Getty Images

Screenshot from the BBC news portal

The article author is Alexandra Stein.

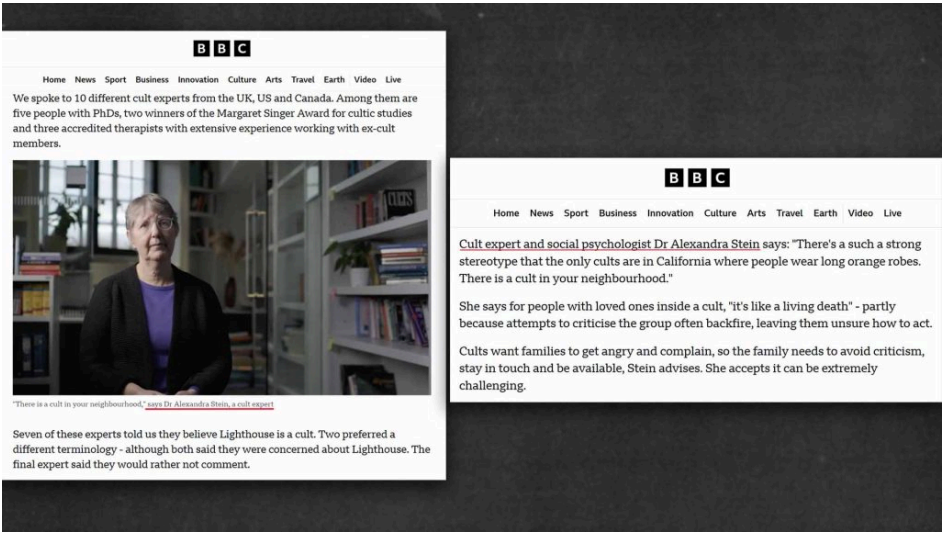
Anticultist Alexandra Stein (UK)

The article says:

*“This analysis piece was commissioned by the BBC from an expert working for an outside organisation.*

***Dr Alexandra Stein** is an honorary research fellow at London South Bank University. She spent a decade as a member of a political cult and **specialises in the social psychology of cults and totalitarianism**.”*

Alexandra Stein doesn't only write articles for BBC, but she's also an expert who advises this media and has a platform for her video and audio speeches, as well as for promoting her anticult organization The Family Survival Trust, where she is a trustee.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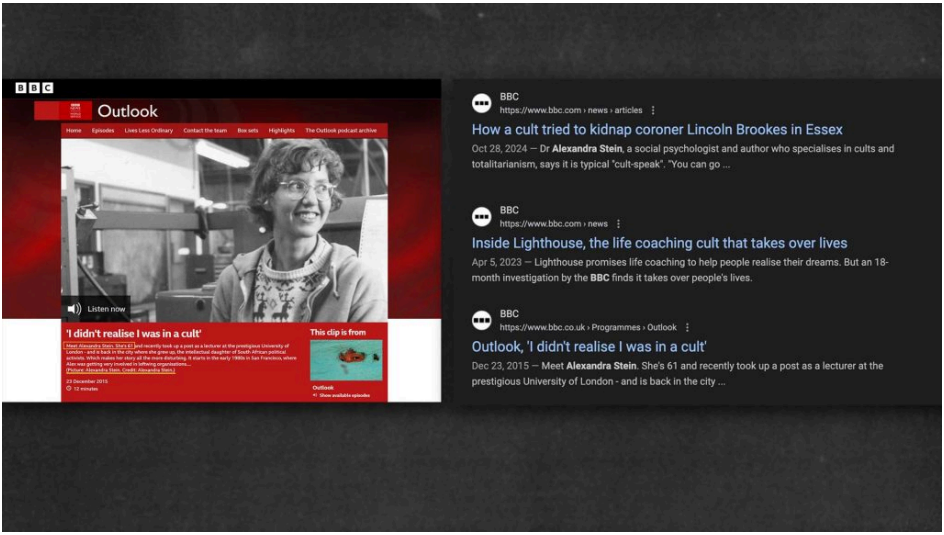
We spoke to 10 different cult experts from the UK, US and Canada. Among them are five people with PhDs, two winners of the Margaret Singer Award for cultic studies and three accredited therapists with extensive experience working with ex-cult members.
"There is a cult in your neighbourhood," says Dr Alexandra Stein, a cult expert
Seven of these experts told us they believe Lighthouse is a cult. Two preferred a different terminology - although both said they were concerned about Lighthouse. The final expert said they would rather not comment.
BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
Cult expert and social psychologist Dr Alexandra Stein says: "There's a such a strong stereotype that the only cults are in California where people wear long orange robes. There is a cult in your neighbourhood."
She says for people with loved ones inside a cult, "it's like a living death" - partly because attempts to criticise the group often backfire, leaving them unsure how to act.
Cults want families to get angry and complain, so the family needs to avoid criticism, stay in touch and be available, Stein advises. She accepts it can be extremely challenging.

Screenshots from BBC news portal [2]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How a cult tried to kidnap coroner Lincoln Brookes in Essex
Oct 28, 2024 — Dr Alexandra Stein, a social psychologist and author who specialises in cults and totalitarianism, says it is typical "cult-speak". "You can go ...
BBC
https://www.bbc.com › news
Inside Lighthouse, the life coaching cult that takes over lives
Apr 5, 2023 — Lighthouse promises life coaching to help people realise their dreams. But an 18-month investigation by the BBC finds it takes over people's lives.
BBC
https://www.bbc.co.uk › Programmes › Outlook
Outlook, 'I didn't realise I was in a cult'
Dec 23, 2015 — Meet Alexandra Stein. She's 61 and recently took up a post as a lecturer at the prestigious University of London - and is back in the city ...

Screenshot from the BBC news portal [3]

It is noteworthy that questions arose not to the topic that served as a newsbreak for writing an article by A. Stein, but to the content of the second half of the article. When specific crimes, violations of law or human rights are revealed, and they are proved by relevant authorities, there should certainly be appropriate responses. In this particular case, we paid attention to how information is presented, what kind of rhetoric is broadcast, what methods of manipulation are used by the article author and for what purpose.

In order not to be unfounded, let's compare Alexandra Stein's rhetoric in the above article [1] with the rhetoric of RACIRS president Alexander Dvorkin [4, 5, 6] and RACIRS vice-president Alexander Novopashin [7]:

Alexandra Stein: *"Some are religious, political or 'self-improvement,' but they can also be publicly described as martial arts, yoga, business, UFO, and therapy groups."*

Alexander Dvorkin, RACIRS president: *"They invite you to free English language courses, to a doctor who's an amazing diagnostician... to courses in Vedic cooking or oriental dance, to a yoga or martial arts class, to an interesting high-paying job, courses for unleashing one's inner potential or personal growth, on how to become a winner, how to learn to draw within one lesson, or to a lecture on ancient philosophical legacy. These are just a few options; in fact there are many more. There may be a cult behind all of that."*

Alexandra Stein: *"Arguably, many terrorist and extremist groups use similar isolating processes to recruit and indoctrinate members."*

Alexander Novopashin, RACIRS vice-president: *"Those are terrorist organizations that hide behind the Qur'an and employ all kinds of recruitment techniques that are actively used in almost all destructive totalitarian sects."*

Alexandra Stein: *"The traits of cults: – Run by a charismatic, authoritarian leader, or leadership group, who seeks extreme levels of control over followers. – Uses a hierarchical pyramid*

*structure with layers of secrecy surrounding the leader. Followers are socially, psychologically and sometimes physically isolated."*

Alexander Dvorkin: *"Totalitarian sects have certain characteristics... Their members selflessly and faithfully serve the group leader and do not question any of his words or actions.*

*As the organization grows, its guru gains many assistants and "close associates" who play the role of "little gurus" for ordinary sect members. They imitate the guru, while ordinary members imitate them. Such a pyramidal structure ensures rigid control and uniformity within the organization."*

Alexandra Stein: *"The group alternates an apparently loving or attentive approach with escalating levels of stress or fear. This could be implemented through sleep or food deprivation, apocalyptic predictions, or threats of violence or sexual abuse."*

Alexander Dvorkin: *"The main thing is, again, that a person is more suggestible when he's under stress. So it's necessary to create a situation where the entire stay in the cult is continuous stress. Stress is when there is no time to stop and no time to think. There's a whirlwind of pressure, a complex of instilled guilt, excessive praise or extremely cruel*

*punishments, group pressure, a specific diet, a reduced amount of sleep, and so on."*

Alexandra Stein: *"Victims may have gone through a recent upheaval, such as a relationship breakdown or moving to a new area. This can make them more open to starting a new friendship, or activity which could ultimately be cult-related."*

Alexander Dvorkin: *"The second condition is that a person must be suggestible. There are more suggestible people and less suggestible people, but there are no people who are not suggestible at all. When we experience stress, suggestibility increases. The greater the stress, the greater the suggestibility;"*

*"...When a person experiences stress, he is much more suggestible. He doesn't necessarily have to be unhappy, maybe he just moved to a new place of residence... and his circle of communication hasn't yet formed."*

This is identical rhetoric, isn't it? But it's even more striking that leaders of anticult organizations from various democratic countries spend time together, including in the company of Alexander Dvorkin, RACIRS president. For example, in 2018, Branka Dujmić Delcourt, Luigi Corvaglia, Janja Lalich, Alexander Dvorkin, and Alexandra Stein met in Riga.

Branka Dujmic Belge
10. 6. 2018 ·
RIGA, June 2018/ Medieval dinner with the 21st century FECRIS' Scientifics...Yuval, Luigi, Jon, Alexander, Janja and Alexandra
Photo from Branka Dujmic Belge's Facebook page second from left Luigi Corvaglia, fourth from left Alexander Dvorkin and Branka Dujmic

Photo 1. From Branka Dujmić Delcourt's Facebook page, *Photo 2. From left Luigi Corvaglia, fourth from left Alexander Dvorkin and Branka Dujmic*

Pictured: second from left Luigi Corvaglia, fourth from left Alexander Dvorkin and Branka Dujmic Belge
Janja Lalich (USA) and Alexandra Stein (UK): photo from Branka Dujmic Belge's Facebook page

Photo 1. Pictured: second from left Luigi Corvaglia, fourth from left Alexander Dvorkin and Branka Dujmić Delcourt, *Photo 2. Janja Lalich (USA) and Alexandra Stein (UK): photo from Branka Dujmić Delcourt's Facebook page*

Similar meetings of the anticult circle have been held many times:

Photos from Branka Dujmić Delcourt's Facebook page

Alexander Dvorkin and Luigi Corvaglia
Alexandra Stein (UK) and Luigi Corvaglia (Italy)
Alexander Dvorkin and Branka Dujmic

Photo 1. Alexander Dvorkin and Luigi Corvaglia, *Photo 2. Alexandra Stein (UK) and Luigi Corvaglia (Italy)*, *Photo 3. Alexander Dvorkin and Branka Dujmic*

These photos depict the key cult fighters from different countries: British anticultist Alexandra Stein, her friend and colleague Janja Lalich, the Italian anticultist Luigi Corvaglia, Branka Dujmic, and others. It is worth mentioning the 2015 FECRIS conference where certain staff decisions were made, thanks to which **Branka Dujmic and Alexander Dvorkin** retained their positions as **FECRIS vice-presidents**, whereas Janja Lalich and Luigi Corvaglia formed the Scientific Committee core and joined the FECRIS Board of Directors. At that conference, Alexandra Stein's UK anticult organization, The Family Survival Trust, was represented by Anne Khodabandeh. Below, we will discuss The Family Survival Trust and its activities [8] in detail.

1 giugno 2015

**Successo alla conferenza annuale della Federazione Europea dei Centri di Ricerca e Informazione sul settarismo (FECRIS)**

Maggio 2015

**IMPORTANTE CONVEGNO FECRIS A MARSIGLIA MAGGIO 2015**

La FECRIS, (Federazione Europea dei Centri di Ricerca e Informazione sul Settarismo), torna a casa. E' stata infatti Marsiglia, sede legale della ONG, a ospitare per il 2015 quella che è forse la più importante delle conferenze tenute dalla FECRIS negli ultimi anni. A far da padrone di casa la GEMPPI (*Group d'Etude des Mouvements de Pensée en vue de la Protection de l'Individu*). In rappresentanza dell'Italia, Luigi Corvaglia del CeSAP (Centro Studi sugli Abusi Psicologici), e Maurizio Alessandrini, presidente dell'Associazione Familiari Vittime delle sette (FAVIS onlus).

Il ricco convegno, tenutosi il 16 Maggio nella sala del Radisson Blue Hotel, è stato preceduto da una storica Assemblea Generale nel corso della quale si è votato per il rinnovo del consiglio Direttivo. Tom Sackville ha lasciato il ruolo di presidente a favore di **Daniël Muller-Tulli**, a cui vanno i nostri migliori auguri. Vice-presidenti il riconfermato **Alexander Dvorkin** e **Branka Dujmic**.

June 1, 2015

**Success at the annual conference of the European Federation of Research and Information Centres on Sectarianism (FECRIS)**

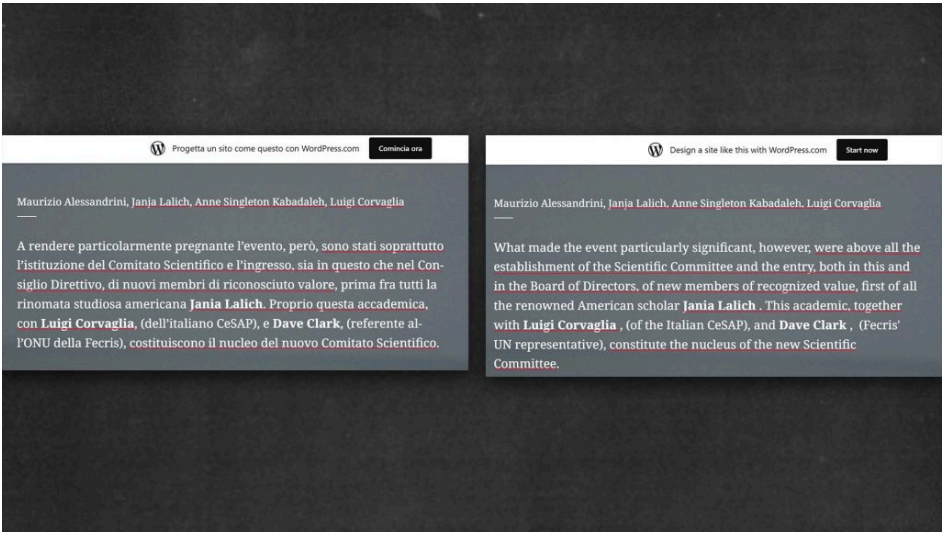
May 2015

**IMPORTANT FECRIS CONFERENCE IN MARSEILLE MAY 2015**

FECRIS (European Federation of Research and Information Centers on Sectarianism) is returning home. In fact, Marseille, the NGO's registered office, hosted what is perhaps the most important conference held by FECRIS in recent years in 2015. The host was GEMPPI ( *Group d'Etude des Mouvements de Pensée en vue de la Protection de l'Individu* ). Representing Italy were Luigi Corvaglia from CeSAP (Center for the Study of Psychological Abuse), and Maurizio Alessandrini, president of the Association of Relatives of Victims of Sects (FAVIS onlus).

The rich conference, held on May 16th in the Radisson Blue Hotel, was preceded by a historic General Assembly during which the renewal of the Board of Directors was voted on. Tom Sackville has left the role of President in favor of **Daniël Muller-Tulli** , to whom we extend our best wishes. The reconfirmed Vice-Presidents are **Alexander Dvorkin** and **Branka Dujmic** .

Source: favisonlus.wordpress.com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Comincia ora
Maurizio Alessandrini, Janja Lalich, Anne Singleton Kabadaleh, Luigi Corvaglia
A rendere particolarmente pregnante l'evento, però, sono stati soprattutto l'istituzione del Comitato Scientifico e l'ingresso, sia in questo che nel Consiglio Direttivo, di nuovi membri di riconosciuto valore, prima fra tutti la rinomata studiosa americana **Jania Lalich**. Proprio questa accademica, con **Luigi Corvaglia**, (dell'italiano CeSAP), e **Dave Clark**, (referente all'ONU della Fecris), costituiscono il nucleo del nuovo Comitato Scientifico.
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Maurizio Alessandrini, Janja Lalich, Anne Singleton Kabadaleh, Luigi Corvaglia
What made the event particularly significant, however, were above all the establishment of the Scientific Committee and the entry, both in this and in the Board of Directors, of new members of recognized value, first of all the renowned American scholar **Jania Lalich** . This academic, together with **Luigi Corvaglia** , (of the Italian CeSAP), and **Dave Clark** , (Fecris' UN representative), constitute the nucleus of the new Scientific Committee.

Source: favisonlus.wordpress.com

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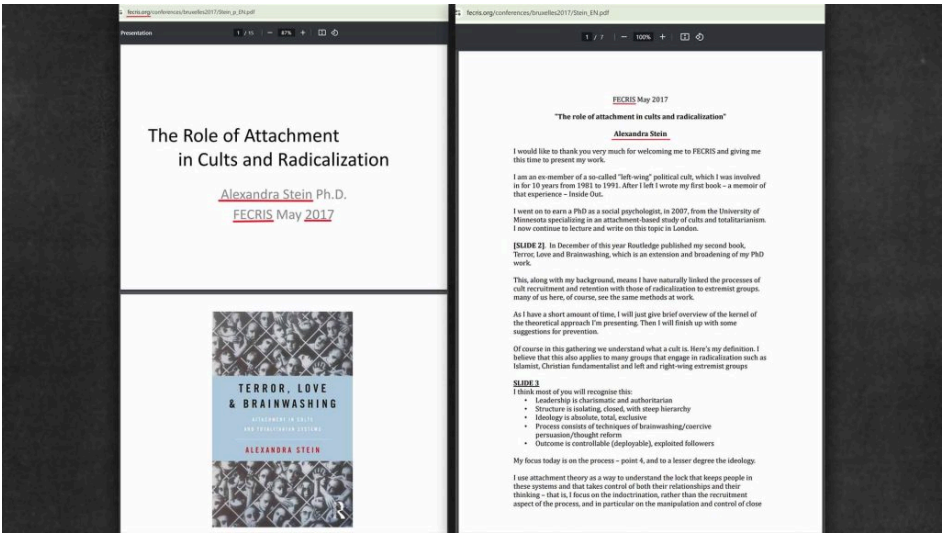
Comincia ora
REPORT – FECRIS Marseille 2015
Anne Khodabandeh, representative of The Family Survival Trust, was in a unique position to brief M. Blisko and the audience about this issue. She explained that it is possible to construct a model for describing and analysing the use of cultic abuse by terrorist entities without mentioning religion. Anne then went on to describe ...

Source: favisonlus.wordpress.com

Let us add to the topic of FECRIS that many writings by Alexandra Stein have been published on FECRIS official

website during Alexander Dvorkin's vice presidency. Here is one of them [9, 10]:


fecris.org/conferences/bruxelles2017/Stein_p_EN.pdf
Presentation
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The Role of Attachment
in Cults and Radicalization
Alexandra Stein Ph.D.
FECRIS May 2017
TERROR, LOVE
& BRAINWASHING
ATTACHMENT IN CULTS
AND TOTALITARIAN SYSTEMS
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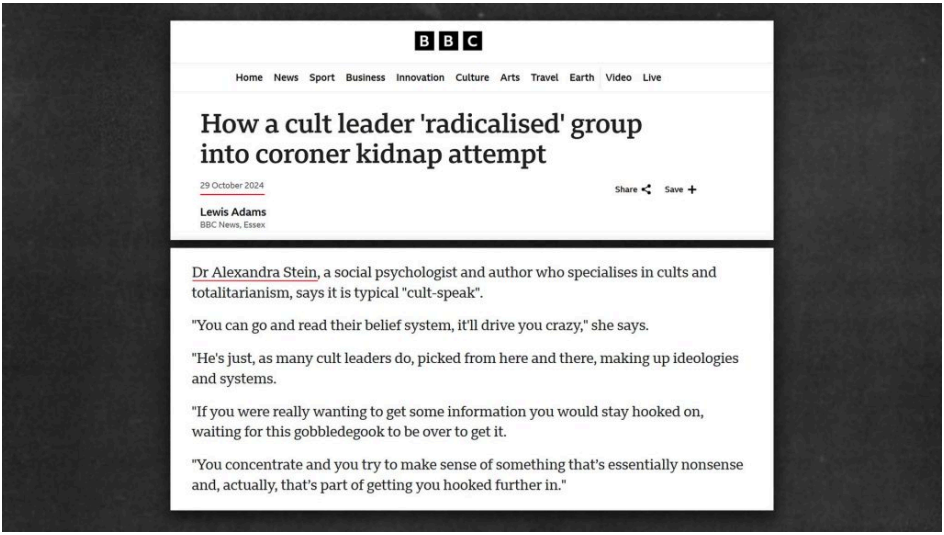
FECRIS May 2017
"The role of attachment in cults and radicalization"
Alexandra Stein
I would like to thank you very much for welcoming me to FECRIS and giving me this time to present my work.
I am an ex-member of a so-called "left-wing" political cult, which I was involved in for 10 years from 1981 to 1991. After I left I wrote my first book – a memoir of that experience – Inside Out.
I went on to earn a PhD as a social psychologist, in 2007, from the University of Minnesota specializing in an attachment-based study of cults and totalitarianism. I now continue to lecture and write on this topic in London.
[SLIDE 2] In December of this year Routledge published my second book, Terror, Love and Brainwashing, which is an extension and broadening of my PhD work.
This, along with my background, means I have naturally linked the processes of cult recruitment and retention with those of radicalization to extremist groups. many of us here, of course, see the same methods at work.
As I have a short amount of time, I will just give brief overview of the kernel of the theoretical approach I'm presenting. Then I will finish up with some suggestions for prevention.
Of course in this gathering we understand what a cult is. Here's my definition. I believe that this also applies to many groups that engage in radicalisation such as Islamist, Christian fundamentalist and left and right-wing extremist groups
SLIDE 3
I think most of you will recognise this:
Leadership is charismatic and authoritarian
Structure is isolating, closed, with steep hierarchy
Ideology is absolute, total, exclusive
Process consists of techniques of brainwashing/coercive persuasion/thought reform
Outcome is controllable (deployable), exploited followers
My focus today is on the process – point 4, and to a lesser degree the ideology.
I use attachment theory as a way to understand the lock that keeps people in these systems and that takes control of both their relationships and their thinking – that is, I focus on the indoctrination, rather than the recruitment aspect of the process, and in particular on the manipulation and control of close

Screenshots from FECRIS official website

Yet, let's go back to BBC materials. A recent BBC publication keeps citing Alexandra Stein as a cult expert [11].


BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
How a cult leader 'radicalised' group into coroner kidnap attempt
29 October 2024
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Lewis Adams
BBC News, Essex
Dr Alexandra Stein, a social psychologist and author who specialises in cults and totalitarianism, says it is typical "cult-speak".
"You can go and read their belief system, it'll drive you crazy," she says.
"He's just, as many cult leaders do, picked from here and there, making up ideologies and systems.
"If you were really wanting to get some information you would stay hooked on, waiting for this gobbledegook to be over to get it.
"You concentrate and you try to make sense of something that's essentially nonsense and, actually, that's part of getting you hooked further in."

Screenshot from the BBC news portal

Similarly to the previous example, this article is also based on a real event, which creates the illusion of the article's complete truthfulness. As a result, readers fail to notice how, alongside the confirmed event, anticult narratives and certain manipulative messages are subtly conveyed. In this case, as in other articles with anticult rhetoric, the story centers on an incident involving a problematic group. However, this single example is used to make broad claims about all groups labeled as "cults" by anticult representatives. This approach is a clear example of the manipulative tactic known as guilt by association.*

**Guilt by association is a manipulative method employed by Adolf Hitler after the failed assassination attempt:*

*"After the failed assassination attempt of July 20, Hitler invoked the ancient tradition known as Sippenhaft to punish the crimes of those considered traitors. With Sippenhaft,* ***a person could be guilty simply by association.*** *Starting with those connected to the failed attack, family members, friends, and colleagues of the conspirators were also held responsible. This tradition was used to justify the imprisonment and sometimes murder of thousands of people."*

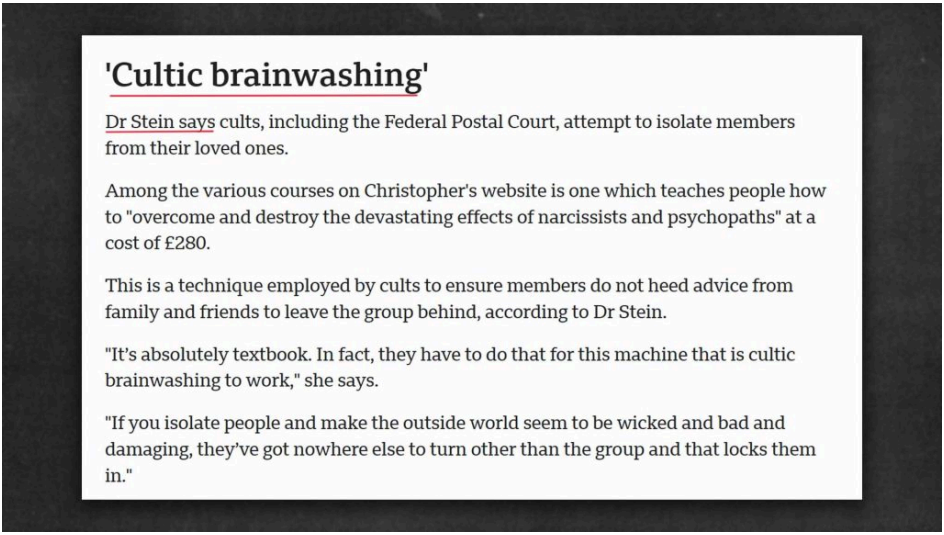
Similar tactics can be observed among RACIRS agents worldwide. Representatives of the Russian organization RACIRS manipulate isolated incidents of misconduct by individuals linked, in one or another way, to organizations labeled by anticultists as a "cult" or "sect". This is done to legitimize the shameful "yellow star" label they attach — the label of "cultist" or "sect member." The goal is to justify the harassment and persecution they carry out against undesirables. This strategy results in the stigmatization and dehumanization of any undesirable organizations and their members, regardless of whether they have violated laws or are law-abiding citizens. After this manipulation, society views the stigmatized individuals through the lens of these imposed labels and narratives implanted in their consciousness by anticult agents through the media.

What does it actually mean – to carry out "dehumanization"? It means violating fundamental human rights and "normalizing" the destabilization of core democratic principles, such as freedom of religion, the right to choose, pluralism of opinions, the presumption of innocence, and others. It also means employing Nazi methods previously used against the Jewish people, which led to the Holocaust. Dehumanization, that is, branding someone with a derogatory label which marks them as a "subhuman," is the first step toward genocide against an undesired group. It's the beginning of a path that ultimately leads to gas chambers.

*In dehumanizing the Jewish people, the Nazis required them to wear distinctive markers in the form of the "yellow star," which was attached to their clothing. This humiliating label marked them as "less than human" to the rest of society, legitimizing harassment of the Jewish people, acts of violence against them, and even mass physical extermination.

# Anticult Theory of “Brainwashing” and Its Critique in the Academic Community

The above-cited BBC article [11], which references the opinion of Alexandra Stein, also includes her comments on the “brainwashing” theory popular in anticult circles among RACIRS agents.

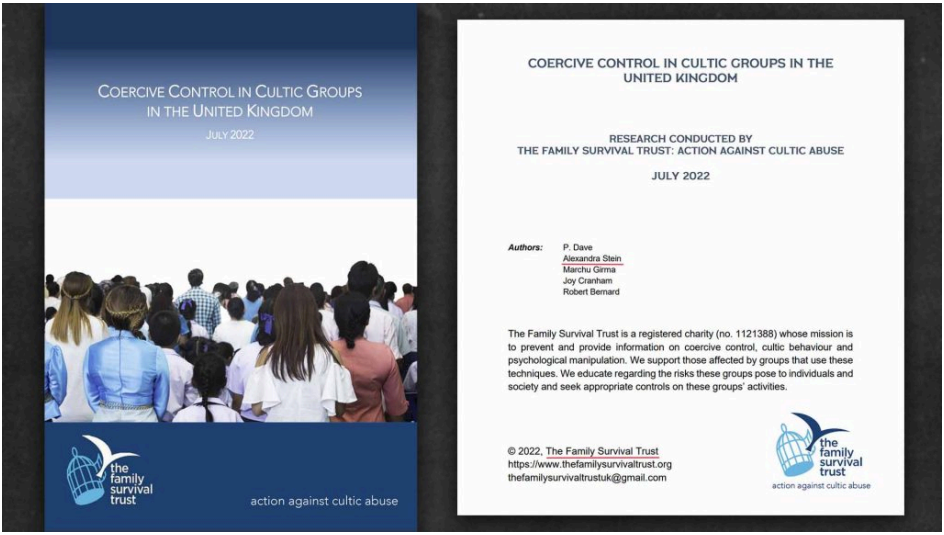

'Cultic brainwashing'
Dr Stein says cults, including the Federal Postal Court, attempt to isolate members from their loved ones.
Among the various courses on Christopher's website is one which teaches people how to "overcome and destroy the devastating effects of narcissists and psychopaths" at a cost of £280.
This is a technique employed by cults to ensure members do not heed advice from family and friends to leave the group behind, according to Dr Stein.
"It's absolutely textbook. In fact, they have to do that for this machine that is cultic brainwashing to work," she says.
"If you isolate people and make the outside world seem to be wicked and bad and damaging, they've got nowhere else to turn other than the group and that locks them in."

Screenshot from the BBC news portal

*"It's absolutely textbook. In fact, they have to do that for this machine that is cultic brainwashing to work," she says.*
*"If you isolate people and make the outside world seem to be wicked and bad and damaging, they've got nowhere else to turn other than the group and that locks them in."— Alexandra Stein*

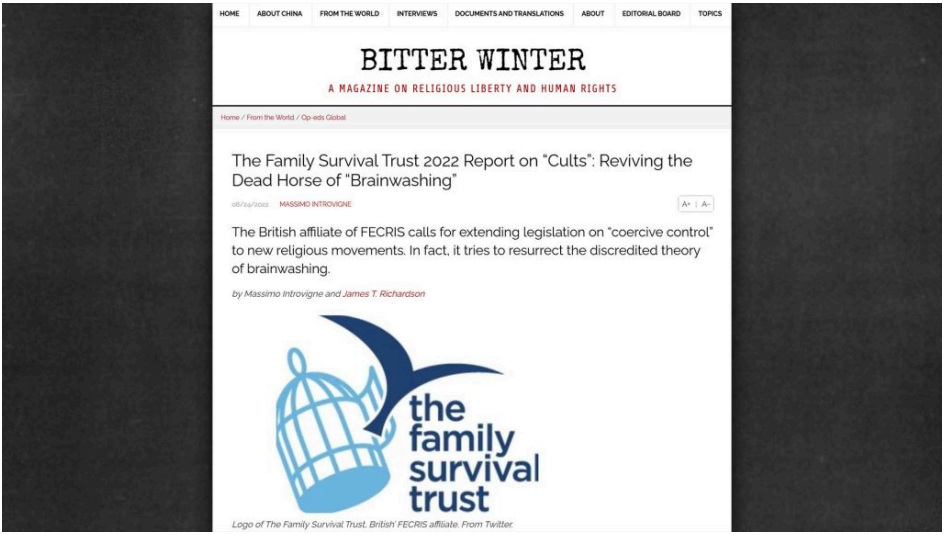
This theory of brainwashing is also discussed in the report *"COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM"*[12], co-authored by Alexandra Stein. This report was published by The Family Survival Trust, a British organization affiliated with the umbrella anticult federation FECRIS. Until 2021, Alexander Dvorkin (Russia) served as vice president of FECRIS, and he currently remains on its board of directors.

Alexandra Stein, who advances anticult rhetoric in the BBC, is also a trustee of The Family Survival Trust, a FECRIS-controlled organization. The report *"COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM"* is designed to lobby for UK legislation on "coercive control" targeting organizations labeled as "cults" by anticultists.


COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
JULY 2022
the family survival trust
action against cultic abuse
COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY
THE FAMILY SURVIVAL TRUST: ACTION AGAINST CULTIC ABUSE
JULY 2022
Authors: P. Dave
Alexandra Stein
Marchu Girma
Joy Cranham
Robert Bernard
The Family Survival Trust is a registered charity (no. 1121388) whose mission is to prevent and provide information on coercive control, cultic behaviour and psychological manipulation. We support those affected by groups that use these techniques. We educate regarding the risks these groups pose to individuals and society and seek appropriate controls on these groups' activities.
© 2022, The Family Survival Trust
https://www.thefamilysurvivaltrust.org
thefamilysurvivaltrustuk@gmail.com
the family survival trust
action against cultic abuse

Screenshots from the official The Family Survival Trust website [12]

Let us provide an example of academic critique and analysis of the report "COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM" and the organization The Family Survival Trust itself by an article from the scholarly journal on religious freedom and human rights, *BITTER WINTER* [13].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TOPICS
BITTER WINTER
A MAGAZINE ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
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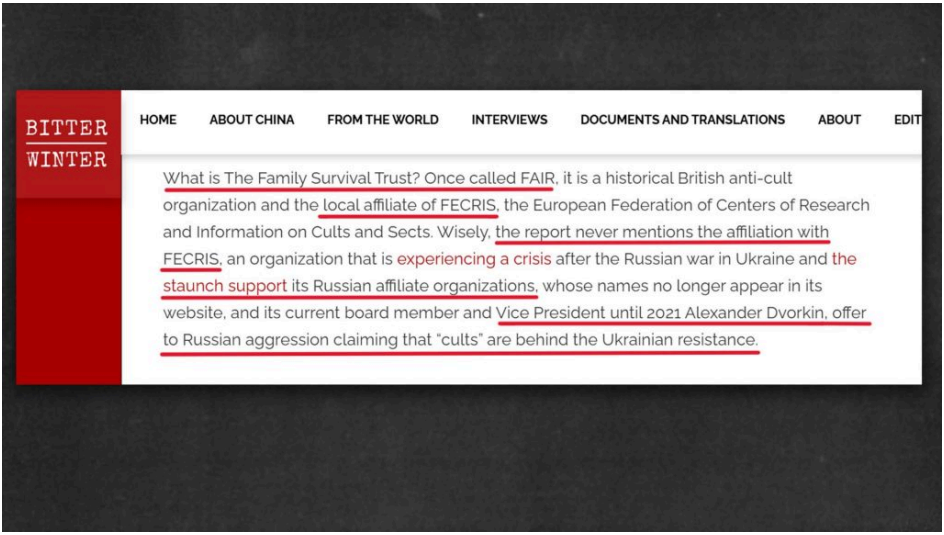
The Family Survival Trust 2022 Report on "Cults": Reviving the Dead Horse of "Brainwashing"
MASSIMO INTROVIGNE
A+ | A-
The British affiliate of FECRIS calls for extending legislation on "coercive control" to new religious movements. In fact, it tries to resurrect the discredited theory of brainwashing.
by Massimo Introvigne and James T. Richardson
the family survival trust
Logo of The Family Survival Trust, British FECRIS affiliate. From Twitter.

Screenshot taken from the BITTER WINTER website

*"What is* ***The Family Survival Trust****? Once called FAIR, it is a historical British anti-cult organization and the local* ***affiliate of FECRIS****, the European Federation of Centers of Research and Information on Cults and Sects. Wisely,* ***the report never mentions the affiliation with FECRIS, an organization that is experiencing a crisis after the Russian war in Ukraine and the staunch support its Russian affiliate organizations, whose names no longer appear in its website, and its current board member and Vice President until 2021 Alexander Dvorkin, offer to Russian aggression claiming that 'cults' are behind the Ukrainian resistance****."*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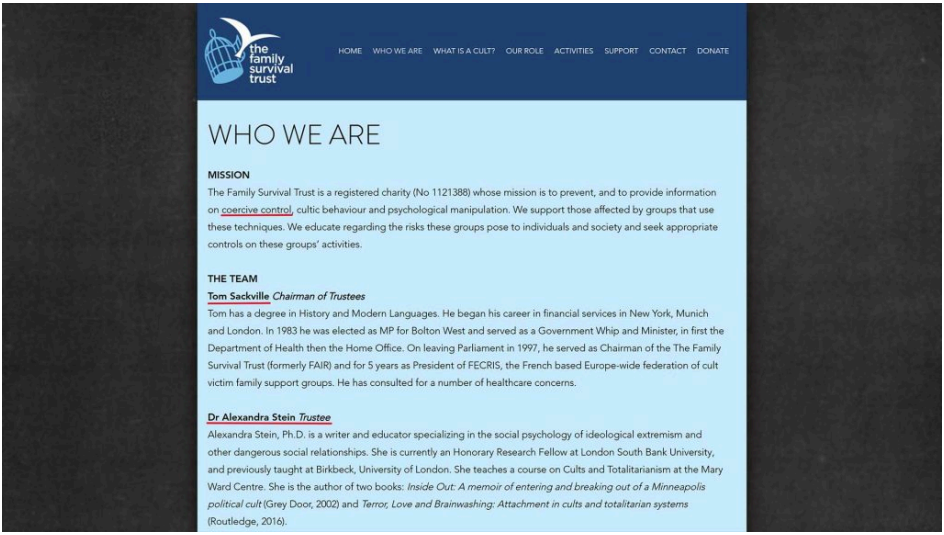
DOCUMENTS AND TRANSLATIONS
ABOUT
EDIT
What is The Family Survival Trust? Once called FAIR, it is a historical British anti-cult organization and the local affiliate of FECRIS, the European Federation of Centers of Research and Information on Cults and Sects. Wisely, the report never mentions the affiliation with FECRIS, an organization that is experiencing a crisis after the Russian war in Ukraine and the staunch support its Russian affiliate organizations, whose names no longer appear in its website, and its current board member and Vice President until 2021 Alexander Dvorkin, offer to Russian aggression claiming that "cults" are behind the Ukrainian resistance.

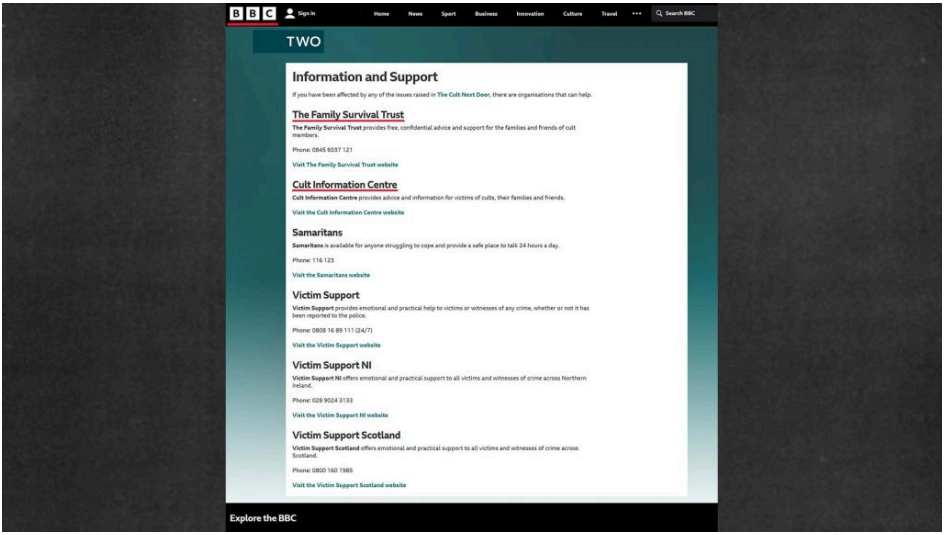
Screenshot taken from the BITTER WINTER website

The official page of The Family Survival Trust (TFST) lists the organization's leadership [14]. In addition to trustee Alexandra Stein, the chairman is Tom Sackville, who previously served as the president of FECRIS during the same period when Alexander Dvorkin was its vice president. They were elected to the FECRIS leadership in 2009, not just anywhere but in Russia, in Saint Petersburg.


the family survival trust
HOME WHO WE ARE WHAT IS A CULT? OUR ROLE ACTIVITIES SUPPORT CONTACT DONATE
WHO WE ARE
MISSION
The Family Survival Trust is a registered charity (No 1121388) whose mission is to prevent, and to provide information on coercive control, cultic behaviour and psychological manipulation. We support those affected by groups that use these techniques. We educate regarding the risks these groups pose to individuals and society and seek appropriate controls on these groups' activities.
THE TEAM
Tom Sackville Chairman of Trustees
Tom has a degree in History and Modern Languages. He began his career in financial services in New York, Munich and London. In 1983 he was elected as MP for Bolton West and served as a Government Whip and Minister, in first the Department of Health then the Home Office. On leaving Parliament in 1997, he served as Chairman of the The Family Survival Trust (formerly FAIR) and for 5 years as President of FECRIS, the French based Europe-wide federation of cult victim family support groups. He has consulted for a number of healthcare concerns.
Dr Alexandra Stein Trustee
Alexandra Stein, Ph.D. is a writer and educator specializing in the social psychology of ideological extremism and other dangerous social relationships. She is currently an Honorary Research Fellow at London South Bank University, and previously taught at Birkbeck, University of London. She teaches a course on Cults and Totalitarianism at the Mary Ward Centre. She is the author of two books: Inside Out: A memoir of entering and breaking out of a Minneapolis political cult (Grey Door, 2002) and Terror, Love and Brainwashing: Attachment in cults and totalitarian systems (Routledge, 2016).

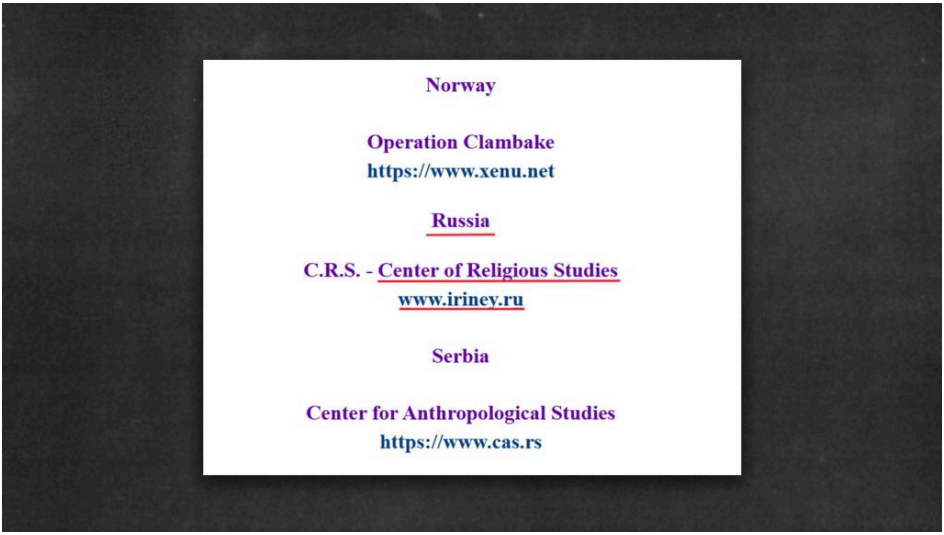
Screenshots from the official The Family Survival Trust website

Given the facts presented, it seems surprising that an organization like The Family Survival Trust is promoted on the BBC's platform [15]. However, upon deeper analysis, it becomes clear that this is neither a coincidence nor a mistake but rather a regular occurrence on the platform of this television and radio broadcasting company.


BBC
Sign in
Home
News
Sport
Business
Innovation
Culture
Travel
Search BBC
TWO
Information and Support
If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in The Cult Next Door, there are organisations that can help.
The Family Survival Trust
The Family Survival Trust provides free, confidential advice and support for the families and friends of cult members.
Phone: 0845 6037 121
Visit The Family Survival Trust website
Cult Information Centre
Cult Information Centre provides advice and information for victims of cults, their families and friends.
Visit the Cult Information Centre website
Samaritans
Samaritans is available for anyone struggling to cope and provide a safe place to talk 24 hours a day.
Phone: 116 123
Visit the Samaritans website
Victim Support
Victim Support provides emotional and practical help to victims or witnesses of any crime, whether or not it has been reported to the police.
Phone: 0808 16 89 111 (24/7)
Visit the Victim Support website
Victim Support NI
Victim Support NI offers emotional and practical support to all victims and witnesses of crime across Northern Ireland.
Phone: 028 9024 3133
Visit the Victim Support NI website
Victim Support Scotland
Victim Support Scotland offers emotional and practical support to all victims and witnesses of crime across Scotland.
Phone: 0800 160 1985
Visit the Victim Support Scotland website
Explore the BBC

Screenshot from the BBC news portal

As seen in the screenshot above, the BBC not only references The Family Survival Trust on its website but also another British anticult organization, The Cult Information Centre (CIC). In practice, this center operates with similar goals, methods, and rhetoric. For instance, a screenshot from the CIC's page lists anticult assistance resources in various countries, including the leading Russian anticult organization, the Center for Religious Studies in the name of Hieromartyr Irenaeus of Lyons, founded and headed by Alexander Dvorkin [16].

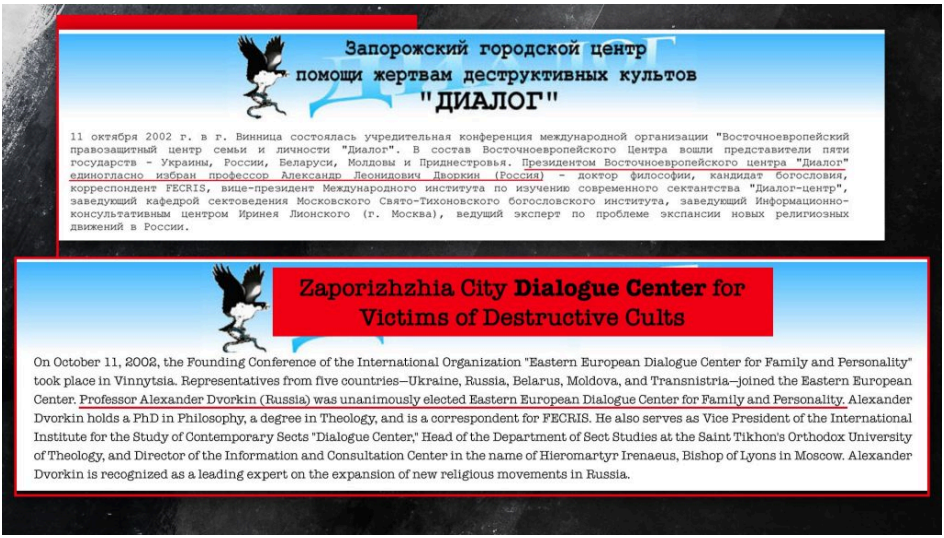



Screenshot from CIC website

In addition to Russia, the list includes many other countries where FECRIS branches operate, such as France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Spain, Serbia, as well as the United States and Ukraine. Notably, regarding Ukraine, the site of an organization directly controlled by A. Dvorkin is listed — the Zaporizhzhia City Dialogue Center for Victims of Destructive Cults.

Ukraine
Ukrainian National Centre of Religious Safety and Help to Victims of Destructive Cults
www.dialogue-zp.narod.ru

a


Запорожский городской центр
помощи жертвам деструктивных культов
"ДИАЛОГ"
11 октября 2002 г. в г. Винница состоялась учредительная конференция международной организации "Восточноевропейский правозащитный центр семьи и личности "Диалог". В состав Восточноевропейского Центра вошли представители пяти государств - Украины, России, Беларуси, Молдовы и Приднестровья. Президентом Восточноевропейского центра "Диалог" единогласно избран профессор Александр Леонидович Дворкин (Россия) - доктор философии, кандидат богословия, корреспондент FECRIS, вице-президент Международного института по изучению современного сектантства "Диалог-центр", заведующий кафедрой сектоведения Московского Свято-Тихоновского богословского института, заведующий Информационно-консультативным центром Иринея Лионского (г. Москва), ведущий эксперт по проблеме экспансии новых религиозных движений в России.
Zaporizhzhia City Dialogue Center for Victims of Destructive Cults
On October 11, 2002, the Founding Conference of the International Organization "Eastern European Dialogue Center for Family and Personality" took place in Vinnytsia. Representatives from five countries—Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and Transnistria—joined the Eastern European Center. Professor Alexander Dvorkin (Russia) was unanimously elected Eastern European Dialogue Center for Family and Personality. Alexander Dvorkin holds a PhD in Philosophy, a degree in Theology, and is a correspondent for FECRIS. He also serves as Vice President of the International Institute for the Study of Contemporary Sects "Dialogue Center," Head of the Department of Sect Studies at the Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University of Theology, and Director of the Information and Consultation Center in the name of Hieromartyr Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons in Moscow. Alexander Dvorkin is recognized as a leading expert on the expansion of new religious movements in Russia.

Screenshot from the Dialogue website[17]

* For more information on the Ukrainian anticult movement and key Ukrainian anticultist Pavel Broyde, an associate of

Alexander Dvorkin who, through a network of RACIRS agents among Ukrainian citizens, laid the groundwork for the war in Ukraine, refer to the previously published article on this portal, "Europe, Open Your Eyes if You Don't Want War."

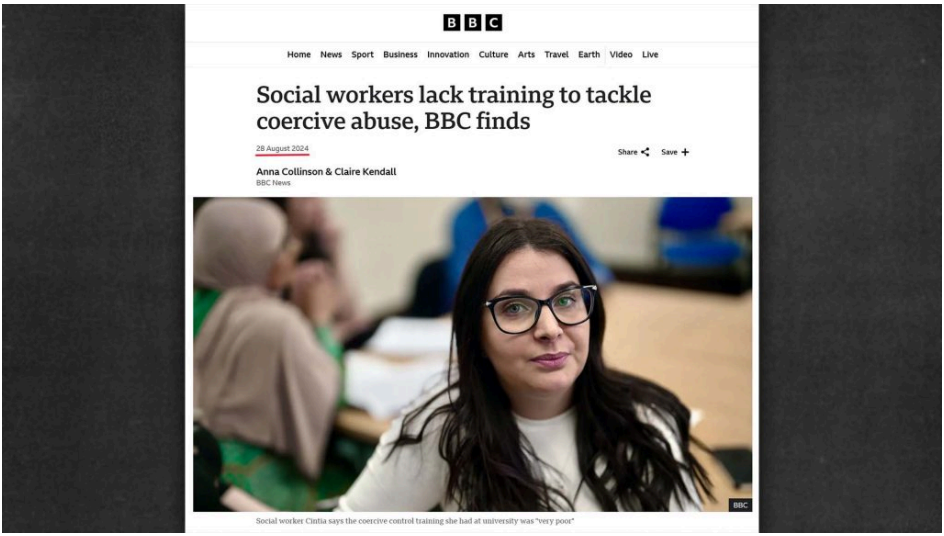
Returning to The Family Survival Trust and its report *"COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM,"* the report raises the topic of "coercive control" or "brainwashing." Below we cite the excerpts from an article discussing this report, published in the journal on religious freedom and human rights *BITTER WINTER*[13]:

*"The source of some information [in the report 'COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM'] is even less clear. We read that it is 'estimated' that '1,500 to 2,000 cults currently operate in the UK.' The number appears fantastic, and* ***the source quoted is a BBC radio show advertising the Trust and its survey****. There, we hear the estimate of 1,500 to 2,000 'cults' active in Britain from the voice of anticultist and 'exit counselor' Graham Baldwin, who does not explain how he calculated the figure.* ***This is beyond bad scholarship, and verges on intellectual fraud****."*

*"Irrespective of discussions about '****coercive control****' in family or interpersonal settings, in the Trust's report the cat comes out of the bag as early as page 2, where we read that '****coercive***

*control' is 'also known as brainwashing.' We understand that what the Trust wants is legislation criminalizing brainwashing. There is only one problem with this. Brainwashing does not exist."*

Despite such conclusions from most scholars, the pseudoscience of "brainwashing" continues to be promoted, including through efforts of the BBC. Below is an example of a recent BBC publication claiming that the theory of "coercive control" is insufficiently studied in universities [18].


BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
Social workers lack training to tackle coercive abuse, BBC finds
28 August 2024
Share Save
Anna Collinson & Claire Kendall
BBC News
BBC
Social worker Cintia says the coercive control training she had at university was "very poor"

Screenshot from the BBC news portal [18]

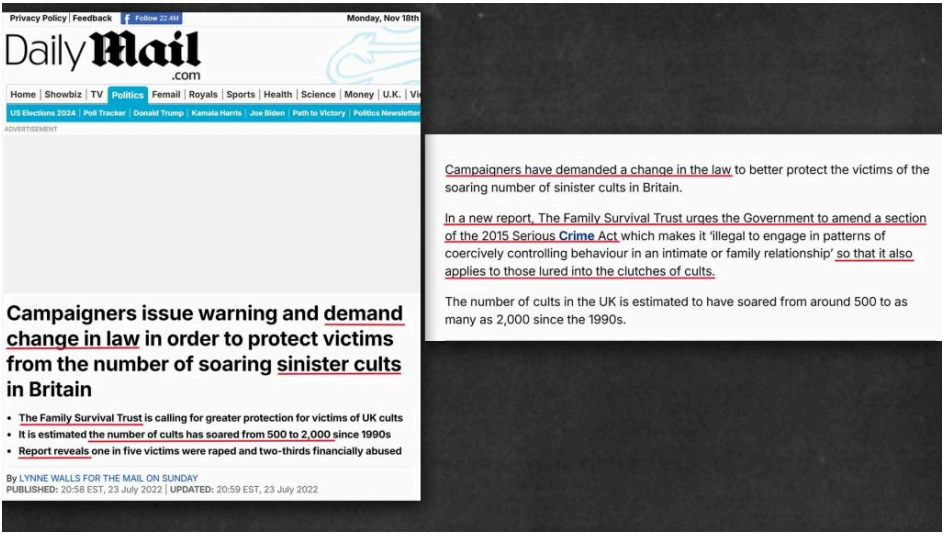
Although the article itself addresses the issue of "coercive control" within families without employing standard anticult labels like "cult," we must recall, as illustrated in the examples

above, that in other BBC articles, real events often served merely as pretexts, covers, or locomotives, pulling along carriages loaded with manipulative messages and narratives and agendas of the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS. We cannot definitively claim that this specific article follows the same pattern. However, since similar precedents have been repeatedly observed in BBC materials — and in this case, we see a similar prominent newsbreak accompanied by terminology linked to anticult rhetoric — the suspicions regarding this publication seem both logical and justified.

As evidenced, despite the predominant academic community's dismissal of "brainwashing" theories, major media platforms that bear enormous responsibility for objective and impartial reporting continue to disseminate disinformation of the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS. These narratives, designed to implant deceitful narratives in the minds of millions, ultimately benefit only anti-democratic forces.

The question of who stands as the ideological center of anti-democratic forces today has become rhetorical. The methodology, rhetoric, narratives, propaganda, and disinformation continue to echo year after year, decade after decade, from the mouths of anticult agents of RACIRS, who cloak themselves behind the purported noble guise of "protecting" society from "cults."

In addition to the BBC, other British media outlets have also amplified the promotion of the *"COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM"* report and The Family Survival Trust, often quoting Alexandra Stein. This includes coverage by the British tabloid and online news platform *Daily Mail* [19].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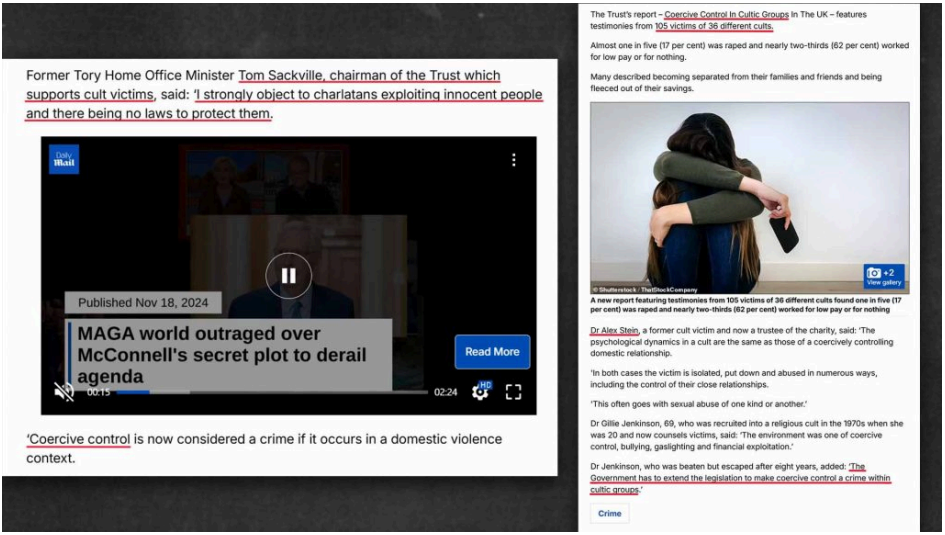
Campaigners issue warning and demand change in law in order to protect victims from the number of soaring sinister cults in Britain
The Family Survival Trust is calling for greater protection for victims of UK cults
It is estimated the number of cults has soared from 500 to 2,000 since 1990s
Report reveals one in five victims were raped and two-thirds financially abused
By LYNNE WALLS FOR THE MAIL ON SUNDAY
PUBLISHED: 20:58 EST, 23 July 2022 | UPDATED: 20:59 EST, 23 July 2022
Campaigners have demanded a change in the law to better protect the victims of the soaring number of sinister cults in Britain.
In a new report, The Family Survival Trust urges the Government to amend a section of the 2015 Serious Crime Act which makes it 'illegal to engage in patterns of coercively controlling behaviour in an intimate or family relationship' so that it also applies to those lured into the clutches of cults.
The number of cults in the UK is estimated to have soared from around 500 to as many as 2,000 since the 1990s.

Screenshots from Daily Mail news portal


Former Tory Home Office Minister Tom Sackville, chairman of the Trust which supports cult victims, said: 'I strongly object to charlatans exploiting innocent people and there being no laws to protect them.
Published Nov 18, 2024
MAGA world outraged over McConnell's secret plot to derail agenda
Read More
00:15
02:24
'Coercive control is now considered a crime if it occurs in a domestic violence context.
The Trust's report – Coercive Control In Cultic Groups In The UK – features testimonies from 105 victims of 36 different cults.
Almost one in five (17 per cent) was raped and nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) worked for low pay or for nothing.
Many described becoming separated from their families and friends and being fleeced out of their savings.
+2 View gallery
A new report featuring testimonies from 105 victims of 36 different cults found one in five (17 per cent) was raped and nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) worked for low pay or for nothing
Dr Alex Stein, a former cult victim and now a trustee of the charity, said: 'The psychological dynamics in a cult are the same as those of a coercively controlling domestic relationship.
'In both cases the victim is isolated, put down and abused in numerous ways, including the control of their close relationships.
'This often goes with sexual abuse of one kind or another.'
Dr Gillie Jenkinson, 69, who was recruited into a religious cult in the 1970s when she was 20 and now counsels victims, said: 'The environment was one of coercive control, bullying, gaslighting and financial exploitation.'
Dr Jenkinson, who was beaten but escaped after eight years, added: 'The Government has to extend the legislation to make coercive control a crime within cultic groups.'
Crime

Screenshots from Daily Mail news portal

The example from the *Daily Mail* article confirms the fact that many individuals involved in anticult activities are consistently attempting to influence legislation, lobbying for laws that would expand their power to persecute undesired groups and destabilize democratic foundations in society.

Several points from the article deserve attention. The use of vague, generalized terminology with an inherently positive connotation like *"Campaigners issue warning and demand"* is deliberate. The average reader may not be familiar with the concept of "fighting cults," and the term itself can seem distant or alien to them. However, the position of concerned "activists" and "defenders" is universally understood, especially when the

manipulation is framed in terms of a division into “victim” and “aggressor.”

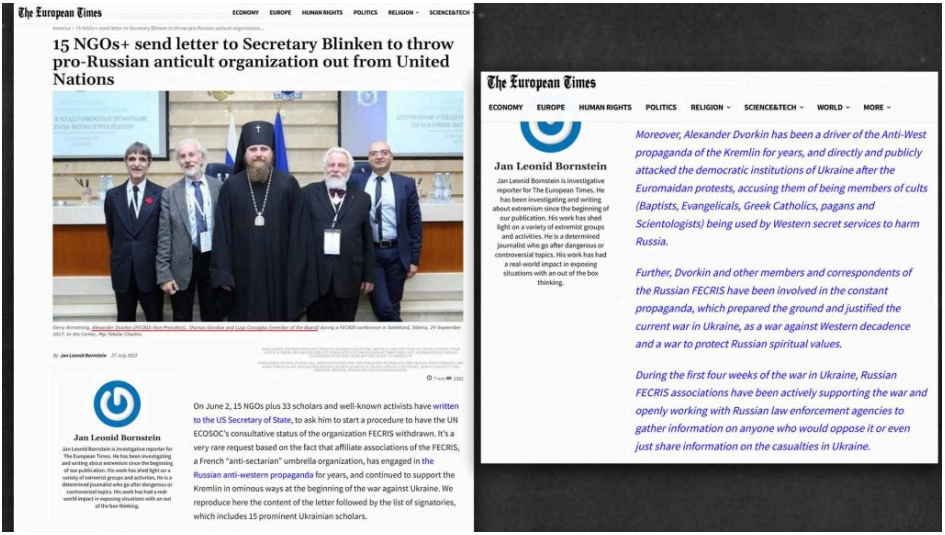
With this wording, the reader is given an image of ordinary citizens, just like him, who are genuinely concerned about society’s problems. As a result, you get an impression that the entire society is calling for protection from these supposed “cults,” when, in reality, this demand is coming from a small group involved in anticult activities.

These are the same individuals who have actually stirred public unease, fueled hateful rhetoric, and manipulated others into violating the law and undermining democratic principles. This reflects the manipulative technique of “concept substitution”, where one term is replaced with another to influence opinions or create a false understanding. Such a strategy is evident here. Additionally, another manipulative approach is at play: the “bandwagon effect”, which pressures readers into siding with these “activists” as the supposed majority.

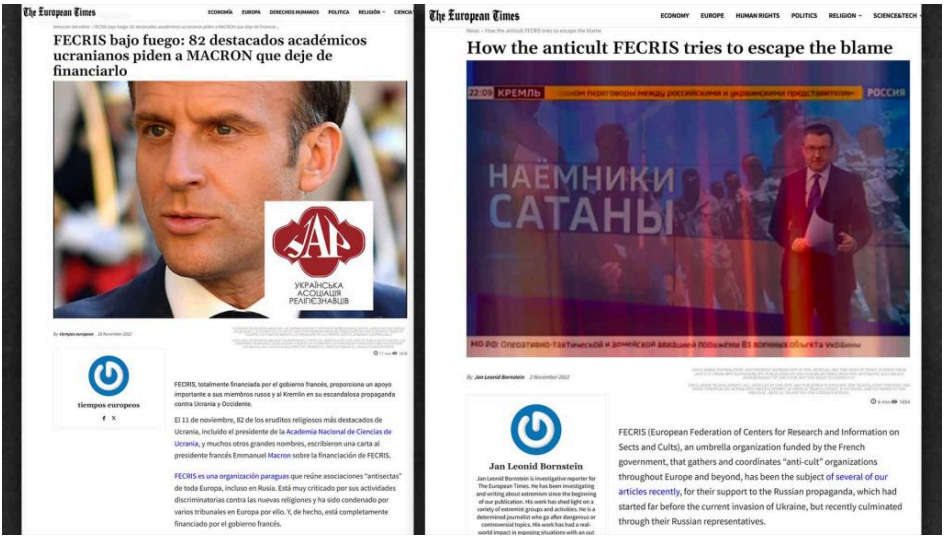
Another key point is the phrase: *“Former Tory Home Office Minister Tom Sackville, chairman of the Trust which supports cult victims”*. Here, critical details are omitted. For example, omitted is the fact that Tom Sackville was president of the European Federation FECRIS from 2009 onward, during the same period when Alexander Dvorkin served as vice president

(2009-2021). Other members of RACIRS have also been members or correspondents of FECRIS, such as RACIRS Vice President Alexander Novopashin, who is still a member as of December 2022. Dvorkin himself, after leaving his position as vice president in 2021, remained on FECRIS's board of directors.

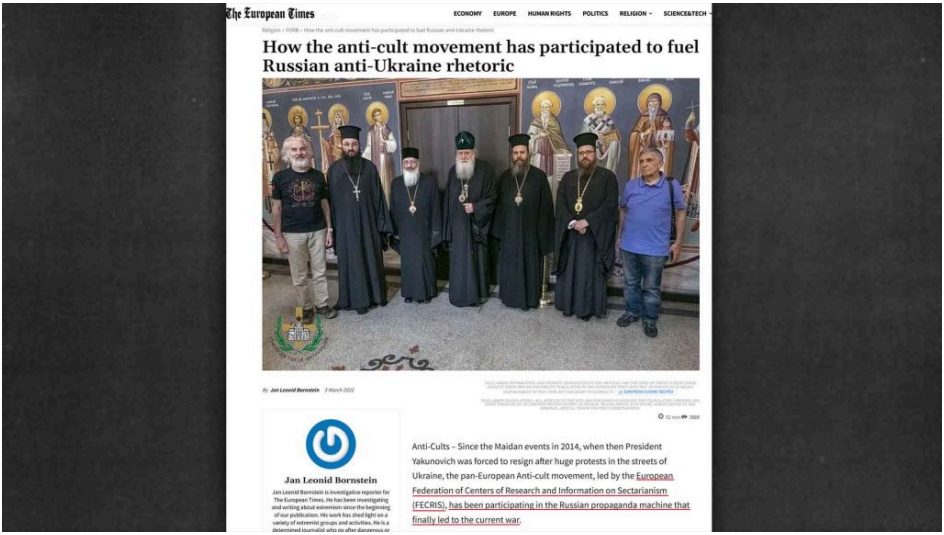
What could motivate the omission of Sackville's presidency in an international organization like FECRIS, especially alongside figures such as Alexander Dvorkin? This becomes particularly intriguing given the context of 2022, the year the article was published on the *Daily Mail* platform. By this time, FECRIS was already under increasing scrutiny from the international community. Concerns centered on its expansive influence in democratic countries and repeated accusations of involvement in pro-Russian propaganda, including narratives justifying the war in Ukraine.


The European Times
ECONOMY EUROPE HUMAN RIGHTS POLITICS RELIGION SCIENCE&TECH
15 NGOs+ send letter to Secretary Blinken to throw pro-Russian anticult organization out from United Nations
Jan Leonid Bornstein
On June 2, 15 NGOs plus 33 scholars and well-known activists have written to the US Secretary of State, to ask him to start a procedure to have the UN ECOSOC's consultative status of the organization FECRIS withdrawn. It's a very rare request based on the fact that affiliate associations of the FECRIS, a French "anti-sectarian" umbrella organization, has engaged in the Russian anti-western propaganda for years, and continued to support the Kremlin in ominous ways at the beginning of the war against Ukraine. We reproduce here the content of the letter followed by the list of signatories, which includes 15 prominent Ukrainian scholars.
The European Times
ECONOMY EUROPE HUMAN RIGHTS POLITICS RELIGION SCIENCE&TECH WORLD MORE
Jan Leonid Bornstein
Jan Leonid Bornstein is investigative reporter for The European Times. He has been investigating and writing about extremism since the beginning of our publication. His work has shed light on a variety of extremist groups and activities. He is a determined journalist who go after dangerous or controversial topics. His work has had a real-world impact in exposing situations with an out of the box thinking.
Moreover, Alexander Dvorkin has been a driver of the Anti-West propaganda of the Kremlin for years, and directly and publicly attacked the democratic institutions of Ukraine after the Euromaidan protests, accusing them of being members of cults (Baptists, Evangelicals, Greek Catholics, pagans and Scientologists) being used by Western secret services to harm Russia.
Further, Dvorkin and other members and correspondents of the Russian FECRIS have been involved in the constant propaganda, which prepared the ground and justified the current war in Ukraine, as a war against Western decadence and a war to protect Russian spiritual values.
During the first four weeks of the war in Ukraine, Russian FECRIS associations have been actively supporting the war and openly working with Russian law enforcement agencies to gather information on anyone who would oppose it or even just share information on the casualties in Ukraine.

An article on The European Times [20]

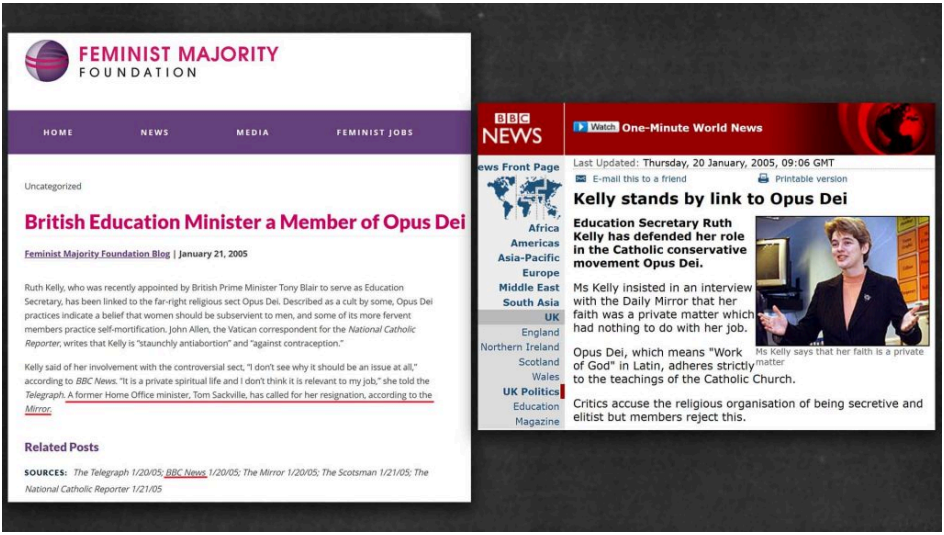

The European Times
FECRIS bajo fuego: 82 destacados académicos ucranianos piden a MACRON que deje de financiarlo
УКРАЇНСЬКА АСОЦІАЦІЯ РЕАПІСЗНАЛЬЦІВ
tiempos europeos
FECRIS, totalmente financiada por el gobierno francés, proporciona un apoyo importante a sus miembros rusos y al Kremlin en su escandalosa propaganda contra Ucrania y Occidente.
El 11 de noviembre, 82 de los eruditos religiosos más destacados de Ucrania, incluido el presidente de la Academia Nacional de Ciencias de Ucrania, y muchos otros grandes nombres, escribieron una carta al presidente francés Emmanuel Macron sobre la financiación de FECRIS.
FECRIS es una organización paraguas que reúne asociaciones "antisectas" de toda Europa, incluso en Rusia. Está muy criticado por sus actividades discriminatorias contra las nuevas religiones y ha sido condenado por varios tribunales en Europa por ello. Y, de hecho, está completamente financiado por el gobierno francés.
The European Times
How the anticult FECRIS tries to escape the blame
НАЁМНИКИ САТАНЫ
Jan Leonid Bornstein
FECRIS (European Federation of Centers for Research and Information on Sects and Cults), an umbrella organization funded by the French government, that gathers and coordinates "anti-cult" organizations throughout Europe and beyond, has been the subject of several of our articles recently, for their support to the Russian propaganda, which had started far before the current invasion of Ukraine, but recently culminated through their Russian representatives.

Articles on The European Times [21, 22]


The European Times
ECONOMY
EUROPE
HUMAN RIGHTS
POLITICS
RELIGION
SCIENCE&TECH
How the anti-cult movement has participated to fuel Russian anti-Ukraine rhetoric
Jan Leonid Bornstein
Anti-Cults – Since the Maidan events in 2014, when then President Yakunovich was forced to resign after huge protests in the streets of Ukraine, the pan-European Anti-cult movement, led by the European Federation of Centers of Research and Information on Sectarianism (FECRIS), has been participating in the Russian propaganda machine that finally led to the current war.

An article on The European Times [23]

Let us add an important fact. In 2005, Tom Sackville (the same year he was elected vice president of FECRIS) used anticult rhetoric to call for the resignation of Education Secretary Ruth Kelly. Simultaneously, the BBC published articles about Opus Dei, an organization Ruth Kelly was associated with. At that time, the rhetoric was notably more cautious and measured. However, in 2009 — coincidentally the year Sackville became president of FECRIS, and Alexander Dvorkin of Russia joined its leadership as vice president — the BBC began shifting its tone, increasingly using the dehumanizing label “cult.”


FEMINIST MAJORITY
FOUNDATION
HOME
NEWS
MEDIA
FEMINIST JOBS
Uncategorized
British Education Minister a Member of Opus Dei
Feminist Majority Foundation Blog | January 21, 2005
Ruth Kelly, who was recently appointed by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to serve as Education Secretary, has been linked to the far-right religious sect Opus Dei. Described as a cult by some, Opus Dei practices indicate a belief that women should be subservient to men, and some of its more fervent members practice self-mortification. John Allen, the Vatican correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter, writes that Kelly is "staunchly antiabortion" and "against contraception."
Kelly said of her involvement with the controversial sect, "I don't see why it should be an issue at all," according to BBC News. "It is a private spiritual life and I don't think it is relevant to my job," she told the Telegraph. A former Home Office minister, Tom Sackville, has called for her resignation, according to the Mirror.
Related Posts
SOURCES: The Telegraph 1/20/05; BBC News 1/20/05; The Mirror 1/20/05; The Scotsman 1/21/05; The National Catholic Reporter 1/21/05
BBC NEWS
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Last Updated: Thursday, 20 January, 2005, 09:06 GMT
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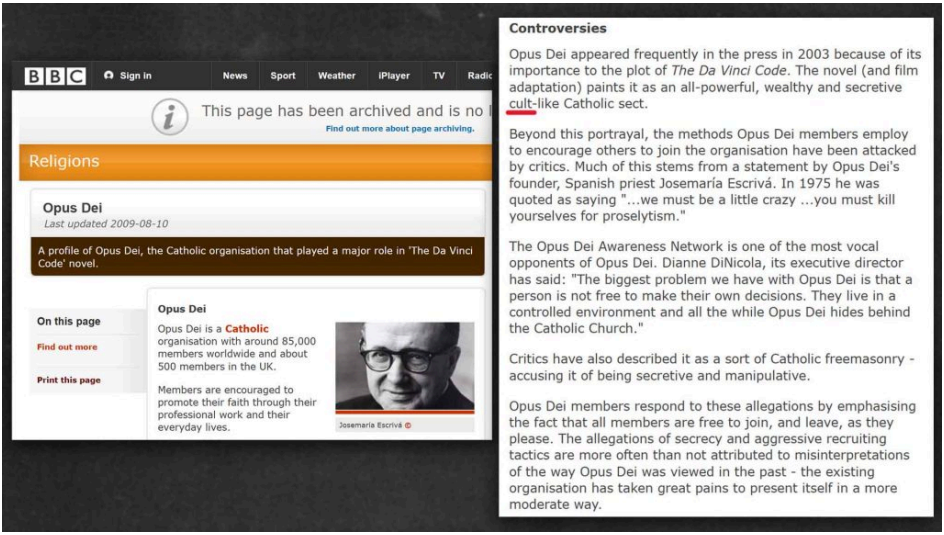
Printable version
Kelly stands by link to Opus Dei
Education Secretary Ruth Kelly has defended her role in the Catholic conservative movement Opus Dei.
Ms Kelly insisted in an interview with the Daily Mirror that her faith was a private matter which had nothing to do with her job.
Ms Kelly says that her faith is a private matter
Opus Dei, which means "Work of God" in Latin, adheres strictly to the teachings of the Catholic Church.
Critics accuse the religious organisation of being secretive and elitist but members reject this.
Africa
Americas
Asia-Pacific
Europe
Middle East
South Asia
UK
England
Northern Ireland
Scotland
Wales
UK Politics
Education
Magazine

Photo 1. Screenshot from Feminist Majority Foundation website [24], Photo 2. Screenshot from the BBC news portal [25]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Weather
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TV
This page has been archived and is no
Find out more about page archiving.
Religions
Opus Dei
Last updated 2009-08-10
A profile of Opus Dei, the Catholic organisation that played a major role in 'The Da Vinci Code' novel.
On this page
Find out more
Print this page
Opus Dei
Opus Dei is a Catholic organisation with around 85,000 members worldwide and about 500 members in the UK.
Members are encouraged to promote their faith through their professional work and their everyday lives.
Josemaría Escrivá
Controversies
Opus Dei appeared frequently in the press in 2003 because of its importance to the plot of The Da Vinci Code. The novel (and film adaptation) paints it as an all-powerful, wealthy and secretive cult-like Catholic sect.
Beyond this portrayal, the methods Opus Dei members employ to encourage others to join the organisation have been attacked by critics. Much of this stems from a statement by Opus Dei's founder, Spanish priest Josemaría Escrivá. In 1975 he was quoted as saying "...we must be a little crazy ...you must kill yourselves for proselytism."
The Opus Dei Awareness Network is one of the most vocal opponents of Opus Dei. Dianne DiNicola, its executive director has said: "The biggest problem we have with Opus Dei is that a person is not free to make their own decisions. They live in a controlled environment and all the while Opus Dei hides behind the Catholic Church."
Critics have also described it as a sort of Catholic freemasonry - accusing it of being secretive and manipulative.
Opus Dei members respond to these allegations by emphasising the fact that all members are free to join, and leave, as they please. The allegations of secrecy and aggressive recruiting tactics are more often than not attributed to misinterpretations of the way Opus Dei was viewed in the past - the existing organisation has taken great pains to present itself in a more moderate way.

Screenshots from BBC news portal [26]

# How Anticult Agents Survey and Draw Conclusions About Cult Victims

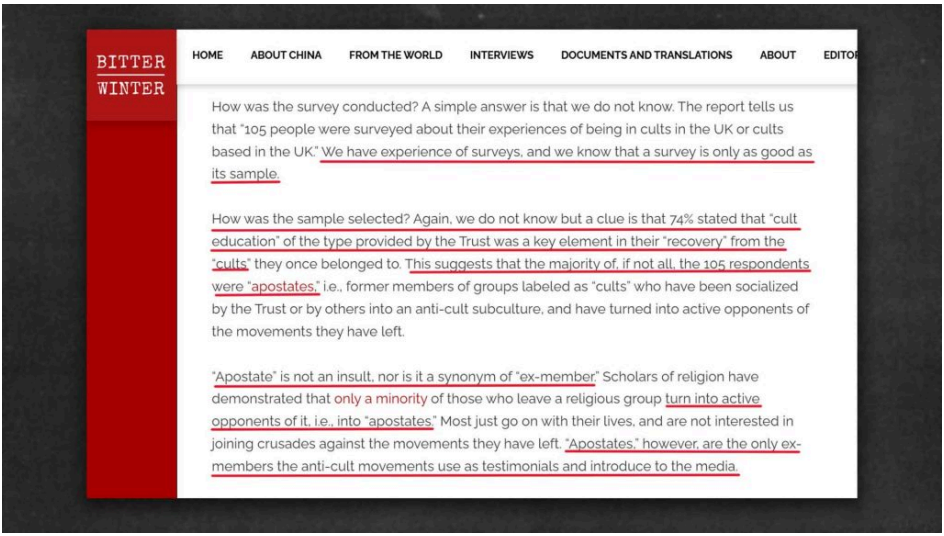
Returning to the Daily Mail article [19], which discusses alleged victims of this "coercive control" and references the survey results cited in the report *"COERCIVE CONTROL IN CULTIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM,"* for further analysis, let us revisit the scholarly journal on religious freedom and human rights, BITTER WINTER [13].

"*How was the survey conducted? A simple answer is that we do not know.* ***The report tells us that '105 people were surveyed about their experiences of being in cults in the UK or cults based in the UK.' We have experience of surveys, and we know that a survey is only as good as its sample.***

***How was the sample selected? Again, we do not know but a clue is that 74% stated that 'cult education' of the type provided by the Trust was a key element in their 'recovery' from the 'cults' they once belonged to.*** *This suggests that* ***the majority of, if not all, the 105 respondents were 'apostates,' i.e., former members of groups labeled as 'cults' who have been socialized by the Trust or by others into an anticult subculture,***

***and have turned into active opponents of the movements they have left.***

*'Apostate' is not an insult, nor is it a synonym of 'ex-member.' Scholars of religion have demonstrated that only a minority of those who leave a religious group turn into active opponents of it, i.e., into 'apostates.' Most just go on with their lives, and are not interested in joining crusades against the movements they have left.* ***'Apostates,' however, are the only ex-members the anticult movements use as testimonials and introduce to the media."***


BITTER WINTER
HOME
ABOUT CHINA
FROM THE WORLD
INTERVIEWS
DOCUMENTS AND TRANSLATIONS
ABOUT
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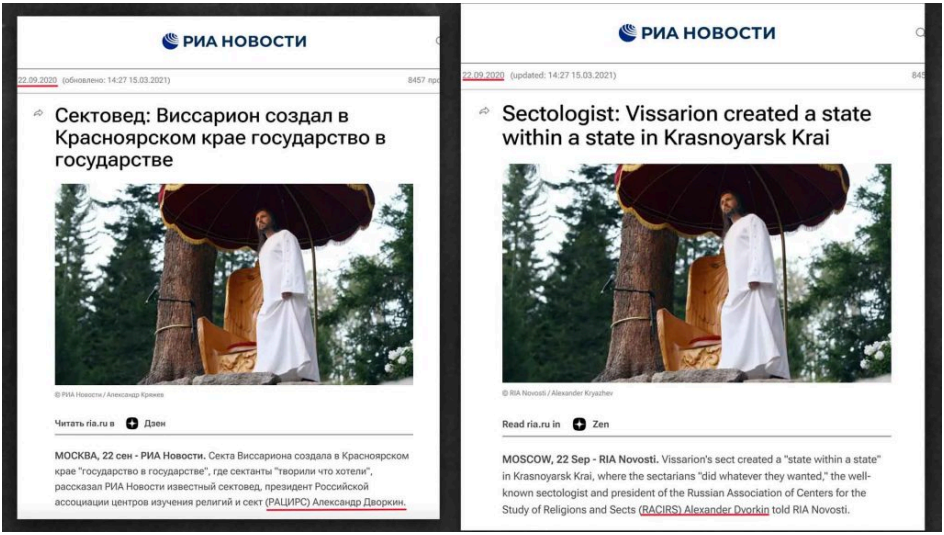
"Apostate" is not an insult, nor is it a synonym of "ex-member." Scholars of religion have demonstrated that only a minority of those who leave a religious group turn into active opponents of it, i.e., into "apostates." Most just go on with their lives, and are not interested in joining crusades against the movements they have left. "Apostates," however, are the only ex-members the anti-cult movements use as testimonials and introduce to the media.

Screenshot taken from the BITTER WINTER website

# The synchronicity of RACIRS agents in dehumanizing targeted

# groups: Russia and the UK as a Case Study

In 2020, Alexander Dvorkin launched a mass discreditation campaign against the Community of Vissarion in Russian media. Coincidentally, the BBC simultaneously began publishing a series of demonizing articles about the same community, using similar rhetoric and applying the label “cult.” Remarkably, some articles in Russia and the UK were released on the same day.


РИА НОВОСТИ
Сектовед: Виссарион создал в Красноярском крае государство в государстве
Читать ria.ru в Дзен
МОСКВА, 22 сен - РИА Новости. Секта Виссариона создала в Красноярском крае "государство в государстве", где сектанты "творили что хотели", рассказал РИА Новости известный сектовед, президент Российской ассоциации центров изучения религий и сект (РАЦИРС) Александр Дворкин.
РИА НОВОСТИ
Sectologist: Vissarion created a state within a state in Krasnoyarsk Krai
Read ria.ru in Zen
MOSCOW, 22 Sep - RIA Novosti. Vissarion's sect created a "state within a state" in Krasnoyarsk Krai, where the sectarians "did whatever they wanted," the well-known sectologist and president of the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religions and Sects (RACIRS) Alexander Dvorkin told RIA Novosti.

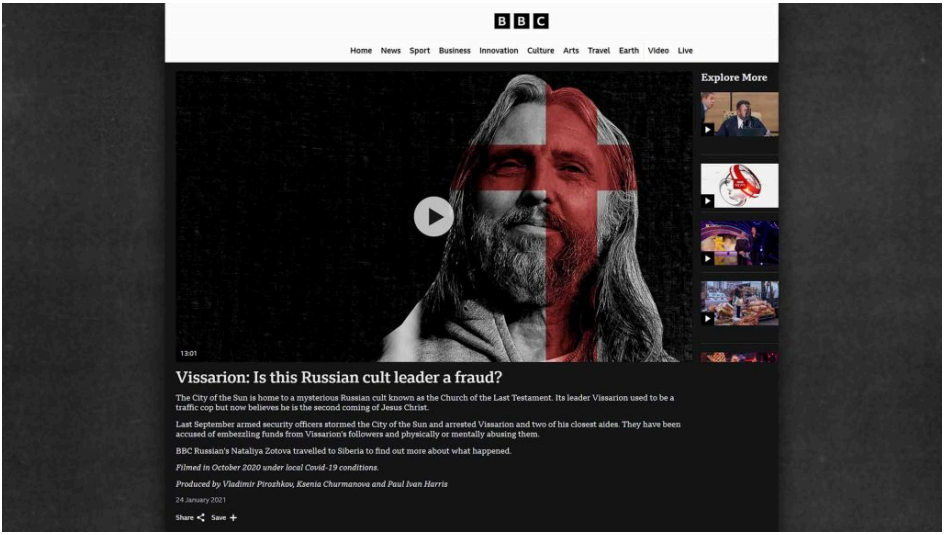
Screenshots from RIA Novosti website [27]

BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
Sergei Torop: Russian religious sect leader arrested over allegations of harm
22 September 2020
Share Save
Alamy
Sergei Torop, known to his followers as Vissarion, was arrested on Tuesday
The leader of a prominent religious sect has been arrested in a remote part of Siberia by the Russian security forces, police say.

Screenshot from the BBC news portal [28]

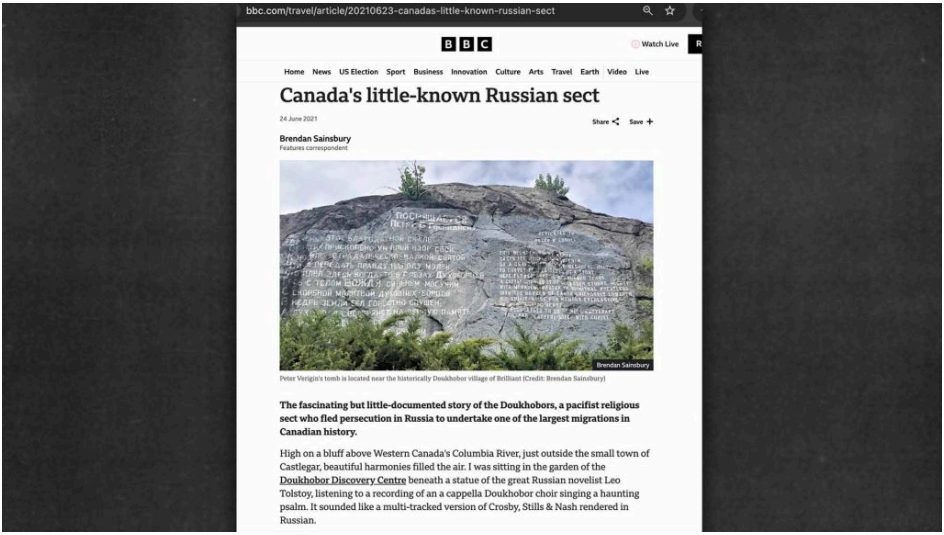
It is worth noting that British media are not the only ones in the international media landscape exhibiting such synchronicity and identical rhetoric of publications with Russian media and Dvorkin. The openness of the information space enables monitoring of news outlets across various countries, analyzing their content for manipulative techniques and identical narratives, as well as uncovering the interconnected operations of a unified network of RACIRS agents. Similar patterns have been observed in European countries such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where RACIRS anticult agents maintain a strong presence. However, this warrants a separate article.

In the context of Vissarion's persecution, the BBC did not limit itself to articles. In 2021, the platform released a documentary titled *"Vissarion: Is this Russian cult leader a fraud?"*[29].


BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
Explore More
13:01
Vissarion: Is this Russian cult leader a fraud?
The City of the Sun is home to a mysterious Russian cult known as the Church of the Last Testament. Its leader Vissarion used to be a traffic cop but now believes he is the second coming of Jesus Christ.
Last September armed security officers stormed the City of the Sun and arrested Vissarion and two of his closest aides. They have been accused of embezzling funds from Vissarion's followers and physically or mentally abusing them.
BBC Russian's Nataliya Zotova travelled to Siberia to find out more about what happened.
Filmed in October 2020 under local Covid-19 conditions.
Produced by Vladimir Pirozhkov, Ksenia Churmanova and Paul Ivan Harris
24 January 2021
Share Save

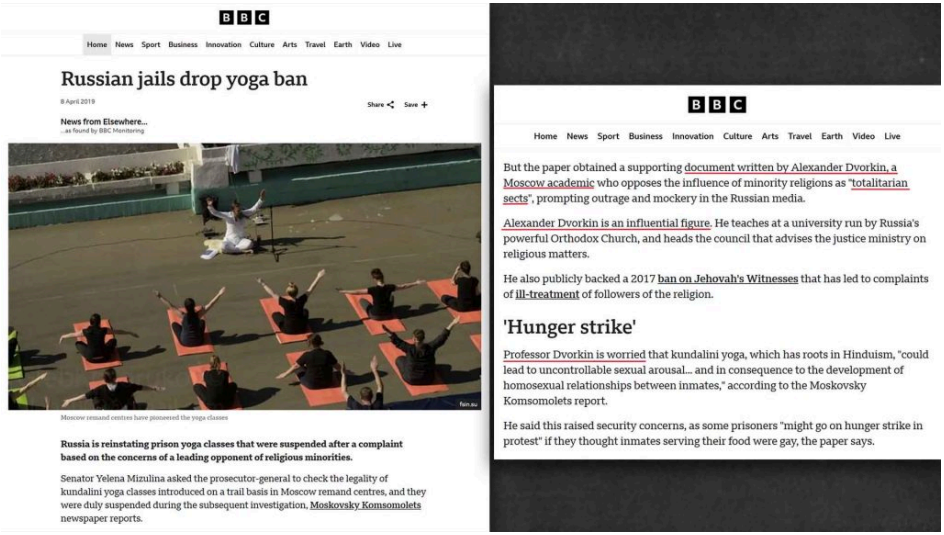
Screenshot from the BBC news portal

Judging by the above-mentioned BBC materials as well as its other similar publications, it appears the BBC is deeply concerned about the presence of "cults" in Russia. For instance, even the Russian RACIRS-labeled "sect of Leo Tolstoy" is branded as a "sect" and similarly attracts the BBC's attention [30].


bbc.com/travel/article/20210623-canadas-little-known-russian-sect
BBC
Watch Live
Home News US Election Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
Canada's little-known Russian sect
24 June 2021
Share Save
Brendan Sainsbury
Features correspondent
Brendan Sainsbury
Peter Verigin's tomb is located near the historically Doukhobor village of Brilliant (Credit: Brendan Sainsbury)
The fascinating but little-documented story of the Doukhobors, a pacifist religious sect who fled persecution in Russia to undertake one of the largest migrations in Canadian history.
High on a bluff above Western Canada's Columbia River, just outside the small town of Castlegar, beautiful harmonies filled the air. I was sitting in the garden of the Doukhobor Discovery Centre beneath a statue of the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, listening to a recording of an a cappella Doukhobor choir singing a haunting psalm. It sounded like a multi-tracked version of Crosby, Stills & Nash rendered in Russian.

Screenshot from the BBC news portal

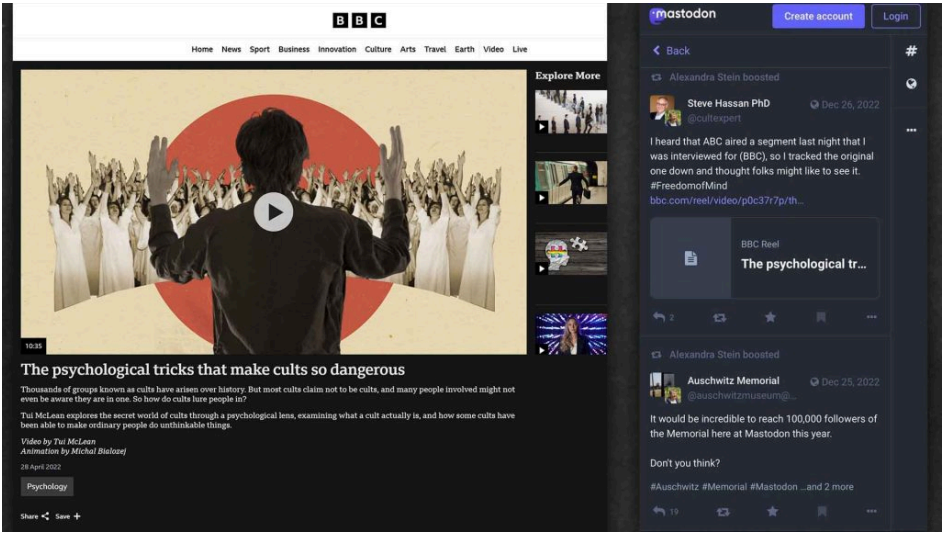
As for RACIRS president Alexander Dvorkin and his depiction by these media outlets, the BBC presents him as a respected expert, professor, and academic[31]. The portrayal is more than favorable, bordering on complimentary, particularly regarding his anti-democratic activities targeting undesirable groups.


BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
Russian jails drop yoga ban
8 April 2019
Share Save
News from Elsewhere...
...as found by BBC Monitoring
Moscow remand centres have pioneered the yoga classes
Russia is reinstating prison yoga classes that were suspended after a complaint based on the concerns of a leading opponent of religious minorities.
Senator Yelena Mizulina asked the prosecutor-general to check the legality of kundalini yoga classes introduced on a trail basis in Moscow remand centres, and they were duly suspended during the subsequent investigation, Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper reports.
BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
But the paper obtained a supporting document written by Alexander Dvorkin, a Moscow academic who opposes the influence of minority religions as "totalitarian sects", prompting outrage and mockery in the Russian media.
Alexander Dvorkin is an influential figure. He teaches at a university run by Russia's powerful Orthodox Church, and heads the council that advises the justice ministry on religious matters.
He also publicly backed a 2017 ban on Jehovah's Witnesses that has led to complaints of ill-treatment of followers of the religion.
'Hunger strike'
Professor Dvorkin is worried that kundalini yoga, which has roots in Hinduism, "could lead to uncontrollable sexual arousal... and in consequence to the development of homosexual relationships between inmates," according to the Moskovsky Komsomolets report.
He said this raised security concerns, as some prisoners "might go on hunger strike in protest" if they thought inmates serving their food were gay, the paper says.

Screenshot from the BBC news portal

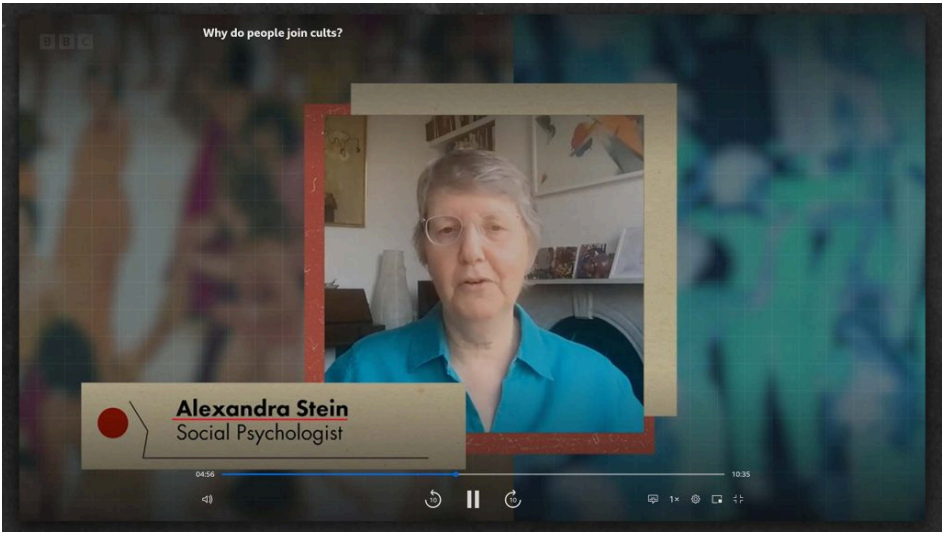
# BBC as a Platform for Anticultists and Deprogrammers

In this article, we have already referenced joint photographs of Alexandra Stein with other FECRIS members from various countries. Beyond informal interactions, including on social media, anticult activists also collaborate by appearing in the same videos produced by different media outlets. The BBC, among others, provides them with such opportunities [32].

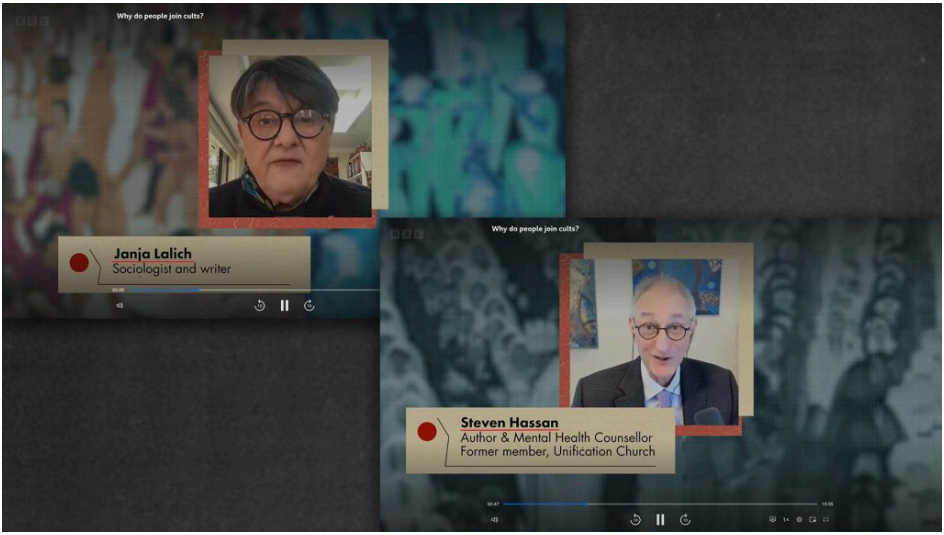

BBC
Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Video Live
Explore More
10:35
The psychological tricks that make cults so dangerous
Thousands of groups known as cults have arisen over history. But most cults claim not to be cults, and many people involved might not even be aware they are in one. So how do cults lure people in?
Tui McLean explores the secret world of cults through a psychological lens, examining what a cult actually is, and how some cults have been able to make ordinary people do unthinkable things.
Video by Tui McLean
Animation by Michal Bialozej
28 April 2022
Psychology
Share Save
mastodon
Create account
Login
Back
Alexandra Stein boosted
Steve Hassan PhD
@cultexpert
Dec 26, 2022
I heard that ABC aired a segment last night that I was interviewed for (BBC), so I tracked the original one down and thought folks might like to see it.
#FreedomofMind
bbc.com/reel/video/p0c37r7p/th...
BBC Reel
The psychological tr...
Alexandra Stein boosted
Auschwitz Memorial
@auschwitzmuseum@...
Dec 25, 2022
It would be incredible to reach 100,000 followers of the Memorial here at Mastodon this year.
Don't you think?
#Auschwitz #Memorial #Mastodon ...and 2 more

Screenshot from the BBC news portal

The above screenshot features a BBC video segment, showcasing a panel of participants presented as experts. Notably, among those featured as anticult representatives are Alexandra Stein, Janja Lalich, and Steven Hassan.



Screenshot from the BBC news portal




Screenshot from the BBC news portal

They also appear together at events and conferences in person:

• Universities: Induction; undergraduate/graduate courses; required modules; sections of other modules; flyers and posters; invited speakers; film series; peer mentoring
• Schools: ditto
• Communities: Parents, social workers, doctors, police, teachers, etc.
• Critical need: train the trainers
22:14 / 25:09 • Climate of awareness
Dr Alexandra Stein: "Prevention before recruitment - Where do we begin?"

Anti-cultists Alexandra Stein(UK) and Steven Hassan(USA) [33]

Moreover, in the example below, the American deprogrammer Steven Hassan refers to Alexandra Stein as his **“an old friend and colleague”** [34].

**“Alexandra, we’ve known each other a long time,”** Hassan also said.

FREEDOM OF MIND
RESOURCE CENTER
Steven Hassan & Alexandra Stein, Discussion
02/28/2019
TERROR, LOVE & BRAINWASHING
ALEXANDRA STEIN
Terror, Love & Brainwashing: A Discussion with Alexandra Stein About Extremist Political Cults

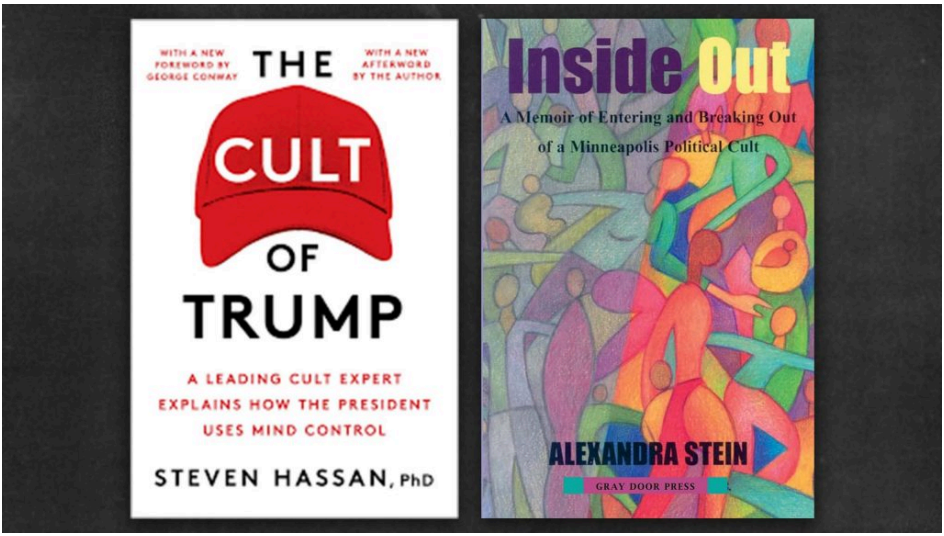
Anticultists Alexandra Stein (UK) and Steven Hassan (USA)

Steven Hassan (USA), Alexandra Stein (UK)

The actual goals of such interactions and long-standing friendships can only be guessed at, especially since anticult representatives constantly go beyond their publicly stated mission to combat so-called "cults." They deploy manipulative methods to discredit authorities, incite discord, propagate hate rhetoric, and create deliberately negative labels and images, not only targeting undesirable organizations but also individuals and entire political parties. Their activities destabilize democracy and demoralize society. It is worth noting that in Steven Hassan's and Alexandra Stein's videos, as well as in numerous other anticult materials, the topic of political cults is discussed, alongside the anticult dehumanization of U.S. President Donald Trump.

# The prolonged media campaign to discredit Donald Trump, organized by anticult representatives

The rhetoric of hate and the use of the dehumanizing label "cult" in relation to Donald Trump have been evident for quite some time. Alexandra Stein's long-time friend, American anticultist and deprogrammer Steven Hassan, even published a book titled "The Cult of Trump," while Stein herself wrote about political cults in her book "Inside Out."


WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY GEORGE CONWAY
THE
WITH A NEW AFTERWORD BY THE AUTHOR
CULT
OF
TRUMP
A LEADING CULT EXPERT EXPLAINS HOW THE PRESIDENT USES MIND CONTROL
STEVEN HASSAN, PhD
Inside Out
A Memoir of Entering and Breaking Out of a Minneapolis Political Cult
ALEXANDRA STEIN
GRAY DOOR PRESS

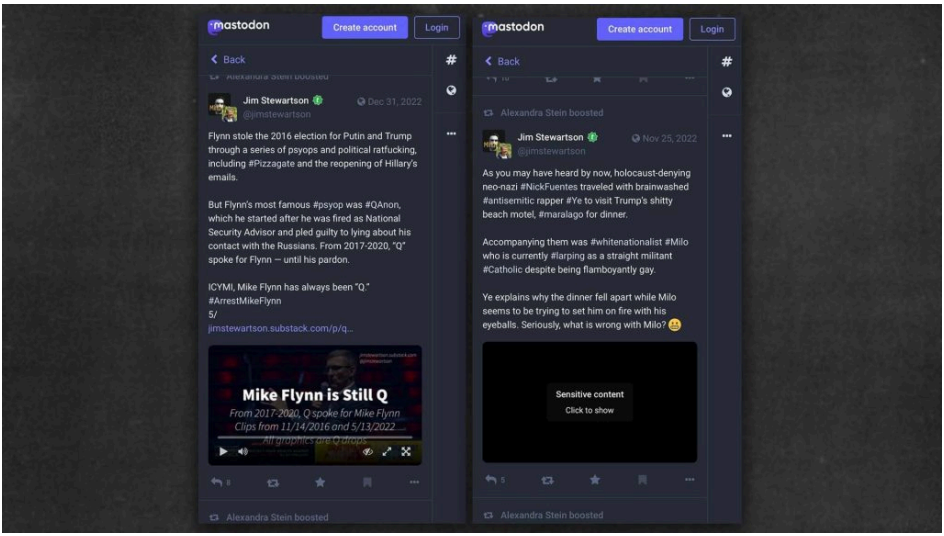
The book "The Cult of Trump" by anticultist Steven Hassan and the book "Inside Out" by anticultist Alexandra Stein.

Earlier on our website, several studies were published regarding the anticultists' campaign of harsh harassment and discreditation against Donald Trump. This anticult campaign of

persecution was conducted both in the media and on social media platforms managed by anticultists. The consequences of this became evident to the world in July 2024 during a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, when there was an assassination attempt on Donald Trump's life, resulting in an injury to his ear. More details can be found in the following articles:

- The Hidden Forces Behind the Assassination Attempt on Donald Trump
- Shooting is Only the Start of a Broader Plot Against Donald Trump
- Fico, Trump. Who's Next?

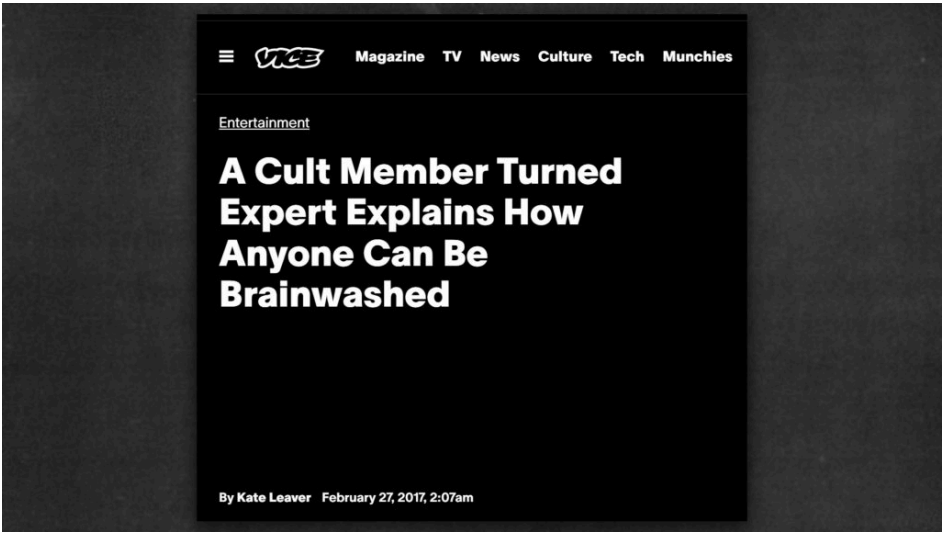
BBC expert Alexandra Stein has also been spotted for reposting similar content discrediting Donald Trump.


mastodon
Create account
Login
Back
Jim Stewartson
@jimstewartson
Dec 31, 2022
Flynn stole the 2016 election for Putin and Trump through a series of psyops and political ratfucking, including #Pizzagate and the reopening of Hillary's emails.
But Flynn's most famous #psyop was #QAnon, which he started after he was fired as National Security Advisor and pled guilty to lying about his contact with the Russians. From 2017-2020, "Q" spoke for Flynn — until his pardon.
ICYMI, Mike Flynn has always been "Q."
#ArrestMikeFlynn
5/
jimstewartson.substack.com/p/q...
Mike Flynn is Still Q
From 2017-2020, Q spoke for Mike Flynn
Clips from 11/14/2016 and 5/13/2022
Alexandra Stein boosted
mastodon
Create account
Login
Back
Alexandra Stein boosted
Jim Stewartson
@jimstewartson
Nov 25, 2022
As you may have heard by now, holocaust-denying neo-nazi #NickFuentes traveled with brainwashed #antisemitic rapper #Ye to visit Trump's shitty beach motel, #maralago for dinner.
Accompanying them was #whitenationalist #Milo who is currently #larping as a straight militant #Catholic despite being flamboyantly gay.
Ye explains why the dinner fell apart while Milo seems to be trying to set him on fire with his eyeballs. Seriously, what is wrong with Milo?
Sensitive content
Click to show
Alexandra Stein boosted

Here is what Alexandra Stein herself said about Donald Trump in one of her interviews [35]:

*"Shockingly,* ***Stein — who attended the Downing Street demonstrations against Donald Trump earlier this year*** *— also* ***believes that, based on her own criteria, the U.S. president has all the makings of a cult leader****. 'Is he charismatic and authoritarian? Yes. Is he building a steeply structured authoritarian hierarchy? It does look like he is,' she says, pointing to the Trump family's involvement in the government.* ***'Is Trump's an absolute ideology? Yes! Does he show us this process of isolation, brainwashing and fear? [The Trump administration is] certainly causing fear. And the final one, does he have deployable followers? I think we're going to see it, unless we get rid of him quick...'"***

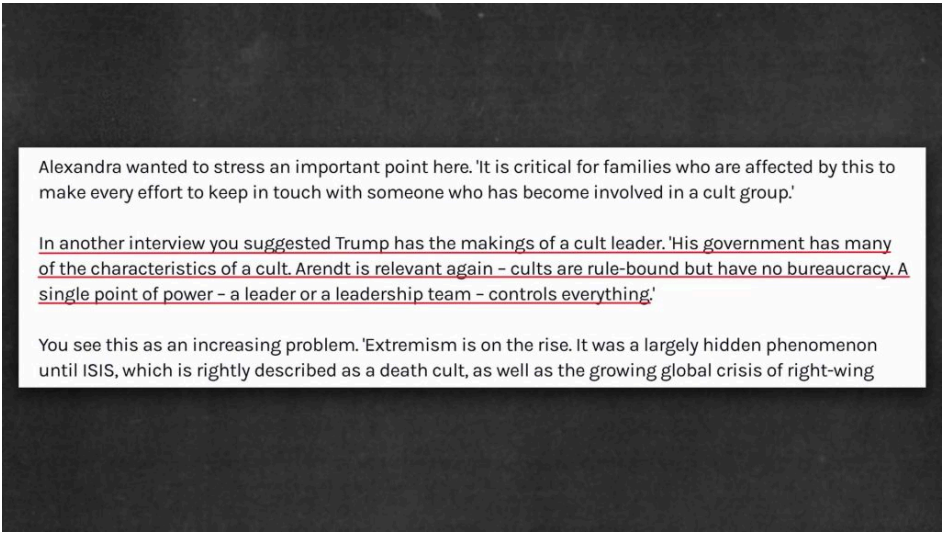
*"'I think* ***we're seeing enough; enough to say Trump is operating like a cult leader,'*** *she says, before adding tearfully, 'I wish it wasn't so.'"*


Magazine TV News Culture Tech Munchies
Entertainment
A Cult Member Turned Expert Explains How Anyone Can Be Brainwashed
By Kate Leaver February 27, 2017, 2:07am

Screenshot from Vice website

In another interview, Alexandra Stein also labeled Donald Trump a "cult leader"[36]:

*"In another interview you suggested Trump has the makings of a cult leader. 'His government has many of the characteristics of a cult. Arendt is relevant again – cults are rule-bound but have no bureaucracy. A single point of power – a leader or a leadership team – controls everything.'"*


Alexandra wanted to stress an important point here. 'It is critical for families who are affected by this to make every effort to keep in touch with someone who has become involved in a cult group.'
In another interview you suggested Trump has the makings of a cult leader. 'His government has many of the characteristics of a cult. Arendt is relevant again – cults are rule-bound but have no bureaucracy. A single point of power – a leader or a leadership team – controls everything.'
You see this as an increasing problem. 'Extremism is on the rise. It was a largely hidden phenomenon until ISIS, which is rightly described as a death cult, as well as the growing global crisis of right-wing

Additionally, we present Alexandra Stein's lecture on the "Cult of Trump" for the University of London, titled "Political Cults and the Use of Cult Tactics in Recruitment and Mobilization" [37]:

EST 1892
LSBU
Statement for the Record
by
Alexandra Stein
Visiting Research Fellow, London South Bank University
Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol
31 March 2022
Political Cults and the Use of Cultic Tactics in the Recruitment and Mobilization of Participants in the January 6 Attack on the Capitol.

Screenshot from Just Security website

*"The extreme, polarising nature of the cultic ideology also isolates people: QAnon followers' families were torn apart, non-believers pushed away by their loved ones' obsessive, irrationality.* ***This also often happened with the families of Trump's followers.*** *It is key to the* ***group's control*** *that the follower's loyalty be primarily to the group and that they are no longer connected to any potentially trusting relationship where they might share doubts or questions about the group."*

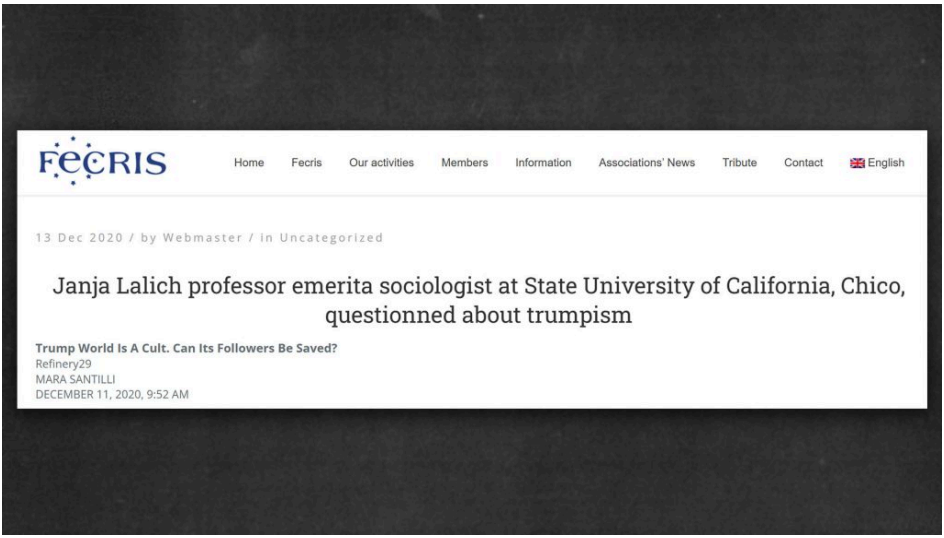
"***The hyper-obedience element – having the follower do whatever the cult demands – is the ultimate goal of the leader. Trump, Moon, and the Proud Boys all demand that followers give their lives to the cause***."

Alexandra Stein's colleague and long-time friend Janja Lalich (*a member of the Scientific Committee and Board of Directors of FECRIS*), who has also been noted for her appearances on the BBC, has repeatedly discredited Donald Trump both on the official FECRIS website and other platforms:

"***We're seeing a cult on a national scale with Trump as the new messiah***," said Janja Lalich [38].

October 1, 2024
The Impact of Donald Trump on America: A Cultic Studies Perspective (Online)
Time: 12:00pm-3:15pm ET
Cost: $25.00-85.00
Sliding Scale Pricing
This online course examines the impact of former President Trump's rise to political power in the American landscape, and very often in clients that we serve. We explore this phenomenon through a multi-disciplinary lens, bringing together sociologist and cult specialist Janja Lalich with clinical trauma specialist Jamie Marich.
3 CE credit hours available
Presenters
Dr. Janja Lalich and Dr. Jamie Marich
MORE INFORMATION AT OUR WEBSITE
janja_lalich and lalichcenter
janja_lalich SIGN-UP BEFORE TUESDAY - For more information and to register (link in bio)
This course examines the impact of former President Trump's rise to political power in the American landscape, and very often in clients that we serve. Through the course we facilitate discussion with course participants about the behavioral impact of such dynamics that we see in our clinical settings and what to be aware of in the coming months and years, regardless of the 2024 election outcome.
#Cults #BoundedChoice #Sociology #Control #Education #CultSurvivor #CultRecovery #CultExpert #IGotOut #Coercion
26 likes
September 27

Anticultist Janja Lalich




Screenshot from the official FECRIS website [39]

# Conclusion

Information about the organized network of anticult agents was only partially covered by this article. However, even this minor example shows how strongly the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS has infiltrated and influenced the entire democratic bloc, and how imperceptibly and deeply its agents have infiltrated key levers of power in other countries, including leading media outlets. The events of recent years — from conflicts in war-torn countries to destabilization across the democratic world and societal unrest — demonstrate the consequences of such destructive actions.

We've grown used to blatant propaganda and disinformation — so bold and predictable — that we often overlook the subtle influence from manipulation experts, whose masters have firmly settled within the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS. Over the years of their activities in the media, RACIRS agents have succeeded in undermining one of the fundamental pillars of democracy — human freedom — while casting a shadow on honest journalism. They have blurred the concept of freedom: freedom of choice, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. Society has begun to forget that the true boundaries of individual freedom are defined by the law and the appropriate law enforcement authorities, not by self-proclaimed arbiters of human destinies.

Outwardly liberal, pro-democracy media represent a space in the information landscape where one would never look for the culprits of hidden antidemocratic processes. This has become a convenient platform for those using subtle, barely noticeable yet effective manipulation tactics. As a result, we see today how agents of anti-democratic forces — members of the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS — destabilize democratic countries and erode the fundamental principles of democracy on which a free and just world is built. This is happening in defiance of all international laws, global stability, and universal peaceful coexistence. As a consequence, society finds itself on the brink of division, polarization, and growing conflict.

Consciously or not, the BBC, alongside other well-known, outwardly liberal media outlets, has allowed the platforming of an ideology that benefits the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS — the ideological core of contemporary anti-democratic forces, direct successors of Nazi ideologues.

What might this lead to? History *does* remember. The world has seen how the ideology of superiority and discrimination, promoted by Nazi-apologist anticult groups through the media, led to the horrific consequences of genocide. The echoes of these events still linger today. These ideas are now being carried forward by the direct successors of Nazi

ideologists, and we are witnessing a resurgence of Nazism worldwide.

The media is part of society and a reflection of its state. Today, however, under the influence of RACIRS agents, it has become a distorted mirror. This mirror is twisting the truth and distorting the essence. Where do we start to free ourselves from the poison of Nazi ideology, to defend democracy, and to identify agents of the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS? We should start with honesty. For media giants like the BBC, it may be hard to accept the fact that for years, their platforms have broadcasted the rhetoric of agents from the Russian pro-religious organization RACIRS. But for the sake of preserving democracy and our shared future, this must be done. Healing requires honesty and truth, no matter how bitter it may be. Honesty in journalism, honesty in the life of each person, as well as respect for the rights and freedoms of every individual, and care for our common future.

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Janja Lalich Luigi Corvaglia RACIRS
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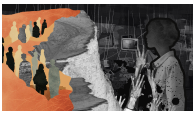

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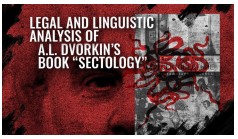


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